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A DEFINITION OF SOCIAL WORK

ALICE S. CHEYNEY

A THESIS

IN SOCIOLOGY

PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL IN
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
I.	WHY THIS DEFINITION IS ATTEMPTED	5
II.	THE CHARITABLE ELEMENT IN SOCIAL WORK	8
III.	THE SCIENTIFIC ELEMENT IN SOCIAL WORK	16
IV.	THE TESTIMONY OF THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF SOCIAL WORK	27
V.	THE TESTIMONY OF THE TRAINING SCHOOLS FOR PROFESSIONAL SOCIAL WORKERS	47
VI.	THE ANSWER TO ITS CRITICS	55
APPENDIX		81
BIBLIOGRAPHY		89

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CHAPTER I

WHY THIS DEFINITION IS ATTEMPTED

What social worker has not been asked to define social work and found himself at a loss? It is easy to describe his own particular tasks but it is not easy to characterize the profession as a whole or to say why its very diverse phases are identified with one another. Why should we apply the term "social work" to hospital social service and probation, but not to nursing and interpreting, services which seem to stand in a similar relation to medicine and the courts?

Definitions of social work are not yet to be found in dictionaries or encyclopedias. A certain amount of characterization appears in current literature, by implication or by mention of one feature here and another there. Some general descriptions say of it things which, though true, do not distinguish it.[1] Probably no strict definition is possible. The field of social work is constantly extending; its functions are multiplying by geometric progression; its means are undergoing continuous adaptation and in all its phases it shades off into other kinds of work or attracts allied work to its own likeness. The inconvenience of this state of affairs is a constant subject of complaint and for at least three reasons we badly need some sort of definition.

In the first place whenever we talk without first agreeing on the meaning of terms we are wasting time and giving unnecessary opportunity for bad blood. The term "social work" is now used in several entirely different senses. One man, in using it, is referring to a characteristic technique, which to him is its distinguishing feature, such, for instance, as social case work; another is thinking of a certain function in social economy, for instance, the relief of distress; a

1. For examples see Appendix I.

third is designating a policy in social reform, a temporizing policy, for example. So long as this latitude of use continues we will talk at cross purposes whether in discussion of specific ways and means or in the evaluation of social work as a factor in human affairs. Any definition would make it easier for us to agree or explicitly disagree on what we mean by social work.

In the second place while the nature and purpose of a calling are perceived cloudily or not at all it does not manifest the coherence and momentum which inspire constructive work. Its followers are in danger of floundering among isolated tasks or finding their sense of continuity and purpose in the mere observation of correct procedure. Social work while feeling an implicit affinity in its many forms, often seems to suffer from lack of any essential principles or any demonstrable obligation or responsibility, other than those incumbent on the community as a whole. The process of definition offers a means of bringing to light any principles or responsibilities especially pertaining to it.

Thirdly social work now suffers unnecessarily in reputation and support (even among its own practitioners) for disappointing demands which would never have been made were its nature better understood. Every undertaking has its limitations and when known and understood they constitute no reproach. But the preoccupations and aspirations of social work are such as to tempt its proponents to enlarge on infinite possibilities, forgetting in their enthusiasm to state that these possibilities can only be realized if the ministrations and advices of social work are accepted in many places where it has no enforceable influence. The limits set to any single line of human endeavor working by itself are very narrow, and for social work, as for other things, they are in practice promptly reached. Social work when it stands thus at the end of its powers seems to have betrayed the confidence placed in it. A limiting definition would show that the fault lies not in social work but in unreasonable

expectations. Such a definition would be its best defense from antagonistic critics and disappointed followers.

Yet "social work" in spite of all uncertainty does stand for something real. Annually there meets a National Conference of Social Work with 2637 individual and group memberships representing 46 States, the District of Columbia, Cuba, Hawaii, the Philippines and Canada and 6 foreign countries.[2] There has lately been formed an American Association of Social Workers[3] composed of master workmen in its several lines, who must qualify in terms of preparation or experience and who are associated for the purpose of maintaining a high standard of work. All this indicates that there is a general concept of social work, and if there is such a thing it must be amenable to some sort of description or analysis. Though water-tight definition seems impossible it is frequently not necessary. If any characteristics can be found which appear in all the forms of social work and not in activities unrelated to it they will at least serve the three practical purposes for which definition is so urgently needed.

Materials for analysis are not wanting. Social work has had its national conference for fifty years, its magazine for thirty-six[4] and its schools for twenty-five[5] and the conference reports, the magazines and the school curricula constitute a competent body of evidence that can be consulted either in cross section or in chronological perspective. If we forego expectation of a precise and all-mentioning definition and adjust our demands to the practicabilities of the case we may hopefully challenge these compact sources of information, together with the dispersed literature of the subject, with observation and experience to stand and deliver a working definition.

2. Conference Bulletin, published by the National Conference of Social Work, Nov., 1922, Vol. 26, No. 1, 25 E. 9th St., Cincinnati, Ohio.
3. 130 E. 22nd Street, New York.
4. "Charities," which has since become the "Survey," was first published in 1887.
5. The New York School of Philanthropy opened its full term winter course in 1904; a summer school had been opened in 1898.

CHAPTER II

THE CHARITABLE ELEMENT IN SOCIAL WORK

The "charities directories" of New York[1] and Philadelphia[2] offer the most inclusive available lists of the various types of social work. For present purposes it will be sufficient to review them by groups. Duplications, omissions, and extraneous inclusions (all legitimate for the purposes of the directories) make the figures of agencies of each type inaccurate but they serve to show the multiplicity as well as the range of social work undertakings.

	New York	Philadelphia
Agencies having to do with health	412	224
Child welfare agencies	233	147
Settlements, social centers and housekeeping centers	227	608
Relief societies	180	102
Societies for civic and economic betterment by means of surveys, investigations, education of the public, etc.	157	369
Adult homes	136	112
Agencies for obtaining or providing employment	123	46
Special educational opportunities, agricultural, musical, etc.	118	71
Philanthropic agencies with a predominantly religious purpose	96	191
Agencies interested in naturalization, colonization and work for immigrants	91	28
Correctional and protective agencies	81	54
Societies serving special groups	81	60
Negroes	29	36
Soldiers, sailors, or their dependants	25	10
Clergymen	8	
Medical men	7	
Indians	5	

1. New York Charities Directory, A Reference Book of Social Service, published by the Charity Organization Society of New York, 28th edition, 1919.
2. Social Service Directory of Philadelphia, 1919, corrected for 1920. Pub. by Municipal Court.

Artists		4		
Firemen		3		
Recreational facilities			63	88
Banking, loan and saving societies			23	10
Of which burial societies are		10	4	
Milk stations, diet kitchens and lunch rooms			20	23
Conferences and federations which include social work agencies			12	20
Legal aid societies			11	2
Societies for the protection of animals			9	14

In cross section no obvious, no easily discernible bond appears among these diverse agencies. An eleomosynary purpose, the first suggestion of most laymen, is indignantly repudiated by the modern social worker and can be, in many cases, categorically disproved. All are benevolent, but so also are educational, religious, artistic and other undertakings not commonly considered social work.

It is a standing rule of science that if you can see nothing crosswise you must try squinting lengthwise. If a present form will not answer your questions look back along its history and consider its origin—study its evolution and genetics. Such a policy with respect to social work brings us promptly to a strong clue.

The interests of social work have wandered far from those of old-fashioned charity and "mere charity" has now a bad name, but we of this generation knew social work before it came of age and when we hear it repudiating charity we recognize the act of a thankless child denying an unfashionable parent. The oldest of the schools was called until 1919 the "New York School of *Philanthrophy*" and the same word appeared in the names of the Chicago school and others. The "Survey," the accepted general organ of the profession (if it is a profession), was until 1905 published as "Charities" and for three years more as "Charities and the Commons." What is now the "National Conference of Social Work" was organized as the "Conference of Charities and Corrections" and kept that title right down to 1917.

We may therefore push our investigation back a step farther and for the question "what is social work?" substitute the less difficult inquiries "what was charity and by what modifications did social work develop from it?" However far apart these two may at present seem it is a patent fact that social work developed from charity and along the route of that development there is hope of enlightenment as to the essential nature of social work.

Charity in one sense is the name of a human quality—that which "suffereth long and is kind." With this sense of the word the present inquiry is not concerned but with a more completely objective meaning. The dictionaries give it as "benevolence, liberality in relieving the wants of others, philanthropy,"[3] or "liberality to the poor, to benevolent institutions or worthy causes."[4] The wording varies little. Philanthropy where it is described any differently from charity is merely a broader term not confined to the succor of the especially unfortunate, as "love of mankind especially as evinced in deeds of practical beneficence."[5]

If we look at this "charity" in action we find its performance to be directed to the same ends even though we follow it back through two milleniums of Christianity and Paganism.[6] Motive and policy vary, but the tasks of charity are recrudescent and impose themselves on each successive generation in terms of the contemporary conscience. We seem, for example, to have forgotten the question which haunted sixteenth century motivation—whether faith without works avails for salvation, but we might still subscribe to a contemporaneous plan of action which demanded "the suppression of vagrant beggars, the punishment of impostors" and "a rational organization of benefits under the

3. New Century Dictionary.
4. Webster's New International.
5. New Century Dictionary.
6. See Lallemand, Léon Histoire de la Charité. 4 Vols. Alphonse Picard et Fils, Paris. Vol. I, 1902; Vol. II, 1903; Vol. III, 1906; Vol. IV, 1910, and Queen, Stuart Alfred; Social Work in the Light of History, J. B. Lippincott & Co., Philadelphia and London.

control of the municipal authorities."[7] The *task* is still with us.

This so adaptable and so perdurable "charity," while constantly changing its terms remains always in essence a free will offering made to those who are in some fashion especially in need. It may consist of material benefits or of services. An authoritative historian of English philanthropy says in his nearest approach to a definition that "Philanthropy, in common with other terms in general use, is difficult, or more probably incapable of strict definition. We may perhaps safely say that it proceeds from the free will of the agent, and not in response to any claim of legal right on the part of the recipient." "The greater part of philanthropy may be said to consist in contributions of money, service or thought, such as the recipient has no strict claim to demand and the donor is not compelled to render."[8]

Does this characterization hold good in our own country and time? First, must the gift be free? Where a service is exacted by law do we ever consider it charity? Free education while supported by voluntary contribution was considered a form of charity but when it came to be supported by taxes its connection with charity lapsed and was forgotten.[9] The upkeep of highways and bridges has been an object of charitable bequest—a benefit which the fortunate might out of his abundance bestow upon his neighbors.[10] The establishment of public responsibility for the highways has lifted this sort of benevolence from the category of charity. Prisoners whose support was not provided for by their own means or the concern of friends were for long dependent upon charity.[11] A nicer sense of corporate responsibility now requiring them to be fed at the public charge we see no charity in their support but when private interest carries into the prisons influences presumably im-

7. Lallemand, Vol. IV, p. 21.
8. B. Kirkman Gray, A History of English Philanthropy. Preface, pp. 8 and 9.
9. Ibid., p. 103 e. s., and Philanthropy and the State, p. 222.
10. History of English Philanthropy, p. 20.
11. Ibid., p. 70.

proving and meets friendless prisoners at the jail gate we recognize the unforced ministrations of charity removed to another field. We still stand near the turn of the road in the matter of caring for workmen injured during their work. A little while ago any provision by the employer for the injured man or his family was regarded as an act of charity. Latterly we have come to consider it no more than right that an industrial establishment should share the burden, as it does the fault, of such accidents, and state after state has enacted laws compelling "compensation." And as relief of the injured man and his family has thus been made compulsory on the establishment in which he works it has ceased to be charitable. The act remains the same but with the loss of spontaneity its charitable quality has disappeared.[12]

It is true that we have a very considerable development of so-called "public charities." But are not the services they render offered through the body politic merely to secure a certainty and inclusiveness of relief for which we dare not rely on private benevolence? And do we not continue to call them "charity" precisely because we still regard them as a free gift rather than as a routine purveyance which the state is essentially committed to provide? Some of them are plainly in process of transition and here and there we find the almshouse becoming the "county hospital," or the department of public charities the "welfare department," the nomenclature following a change in the conception of function.

If, furthermore, we examine the public attittude toward those undertakings which we have cited as having graduated from charity into public purveyance, we will recognize that these are considered public responsibilities in a different sense from any which so far attaches to what we still call public charities. Public education is held to be a natural

12. See also Charities for Feb., 1898. Report of the Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, housing inspection, vacation schools, public baths and vacant lot farming begun by the Association and continued by the city.

prerequisite of democracy; the making of roads a thing contributing impartially to the universal convenience; the feeding of prisoners the inescapable responsibility of those who have cut them off from the means of making a livelihood.

Moreover we make certain doles which we explicitly insist are not to be counted "charity"—pensions given after military or government service or to widows rearing children for the commonwealth—and in disassociating them from charity it is the custom to point out that they are not concessions but just deserts, something that can be claimed as a right.

Charity then is a free gift. It need not be given in love, as its etymology would assume, indeed it may be given in a mood of revulsion, in the hope of expiating a sin or in mere fear of the indignation of the deprived. The recording angel probably keeps a record of the motive and the spirit, but charity, in its simple objective meaning on men's lips, inheres in the act of relief.

The brief characterization of philanthropy which we are testing was two-fold. It declared philanthropy to be a free gift and a gift to need. Just as the one qualification of the act was that it must be in no way exacted so the one qualification of the recipient was that his candidacy must consist only in need. Does this also hold true in our own country and our own time? Surely it is plain beyond any call for proof that only that is charity which is bestowed where need appoints the recipient. Free gifts are made to the prosperous, there is mutual helpfulness among equals, there are services prompted by loyalty and personal affection, but these, though unforced, are not called charity. But it will not do to dwell too much on the negative implications of "need," on deprivation or suffering. We might almost avoid that rather misleading word and say that a gift is charity only when the outstanding circumstance is occasion for it. But it is a familiar observation that ardors or privations which

are accepted as the order of life while we see no prospect of remedy become conscious hardships at the mere rumor of succor and so it necessarily happens that the very act of service or relief prompted only by its own fitness is the creator of an ex-post-facto need even where the situation previously scarcely merited so strong a name.

Charity is not, however, preoccupied with material need only or with physical suffering or any other one phase of life. Moral redemption, intellectual opportunity, artistic realization—these also have come within its purview. It may follow mortal man into his every predicament and minister to his hungers of whatever sort. Only if we keep this well in mind will we be justified in associating it with so negative a term as need. It is the unconscious champion of the perfectibility of man. "The normal life," "our common inheritance," "humanity in whatever form," "the rights of the humblest individual"—these are its commonplaces that have lost significance from frequent and often perfunctory repetition. But the fact that they are the commonplaces of the subject is in itself significant. The commonplaces of all subjects are not of that sort.

These then are the essentials of charity "a free gift and a gift to need." May we go on to inquire what additions or alterations have developed these into social work, or is social work a thing so far transmuted from charity that it no longer shows the very elements of its original? A reperusal of our digest of the charities directories shows the many forms of social work all of them still to include the qualities of charity. In the first place the services of social work are still a gift. Sometimes they are provided by the state in close association with the obligatory work of some routine state department, but in such cases the tasks of social workers will be found to differ form those of the other employees in the department in being not only highly extensible and almost infinitely variable but in some degree

supererogatory—as in the case of the follow-up work of the workmen's compensation office.

In the second place the presence of a need, though less evident among the forms of social work than in the case of primitive charity, is always discernible. Social work often seems to aspire to knowledge rather than accomplishment, as when making investigations or surveys or when any form of ministration is accompanied by so much solicitation of information as to raise the question of which is product and which by-product. But its activities will always on inspection be found to claim connection with the discovery and removal of some form of human ill. Social work itself naturally points to immediate purposes, small definitive tasks like the formulation of a standard distribution of expenses in the budget of a family at subsistence level. To conclude that these are its ultimate objects would be as serious a mistake as to imagine that the medical profession would rest satisfied with a set of dependable prognoses. And these investigations do not exploit the fields of prosperity. They consistently maintain a preoccupation with untoward conditions and a sense of stewardship. Before all social work, as surely as before charity, a Samaritan purpose floats like a will-o-the-wisp, an inconstant and shifting but ever discernible guide, sometimes at several removes from the work in hand but always its ultimate sanction.

Social work then, incorporates, while it modifies, charity, and we find ourselves ready to discuss the second part of our question—what is the nature of these modifications which have produced social work?

CHAPTER III

THE SCIENTIFIC ELEMENT IN SOCIAL WORK

The historical perspective which shows social work to have developed out of charity shows also that there is a close relation between that development and contemporaneous developments in other lines. We know that in every field of production, trade and business, enterprising men have lately developed practical sciences to replace the old rules of thumb, and that even in such a field as teaching there has lately appeared a derived science of pedagogy which levies on psychology and other direct sciences for its material. The stewards of charity, like other people, saw the light of science full on their path. The result was a new hope. Again and again in statements like the following we have been told that the grosser disabilities which charity relieved could be done away with for good if we would systematically search out and treat their causes. "Poverty, vice and crime are no more impossible to stamp out from human society than small-pox and measles. To do the one requires the same intelligence on the part of man, though perhaps in a higher degree, that the other does. The social sciences and arts should have the same expansion as all the other sciences and arts combined in that the relations of men to each other are equally important if not more important than the relations of man to nature."[1] Or again, "The most formidable obstacle to the adoption of the policy of prevention and treatment is not resistance to the necessary public expenditure, still less inability to raise the money, but the lack of administrative science and the shortcomings of our administrative machinery. Merely to relieve destitution has

1. Professor C. A. Ellwell, in Charities and the Commons for 1907, p. 187.

been nearly as easy as to do nothing. But successfully to intervene in order to prevent—whether to prevent sickness, to prevent the neglect of children, to prevent the multiplication of the mentally unfit, or to prevent unemployment—involves the discovery of causes, the formation of large schemes of policy, the purposeful planning of collective action in modifying the environment of the poorer classes, together with scientifically diversified treatment of those individuals who fall below the recognized standards of civilized life."[2]

When charity had thus accepted the necessity of using scientific methods there ensued immediate and far-reaching results. Chief of these have been the three developments which transformed charity into social work. It is possible to trace them in performance and to trace a parallel development of philosophy in the literature of the subject. These developments can be simply indicated as (1) a systematization of service; (2) an interest in causes of disaster, and (3) an extension of charitable interest into new fields.[3]

THE SYSTEMATIZATION OF SERVICE

The converts to a scientific method undertook to work within the traditional field of charity with a new thoroughness and system.[4] Fired with the belief of their times in a tenable norm of prosperity and a continuous progress dependent only on scientific control of our environment they naturally hoped that the most stubborn situation could be harmonized with the general melioration by the use of appropriate methods and they were no longer content to offer only relief, work, care for the helpless and such simple services as were once all that was thought of. They constantly challenged the applicability of old palliative expedients and looked for reconstructive measures. "For every one thing," writes Miss Richmond, "that could then (1832) be done

2. Beatrice and Sidney Webb, The Prevention of Destitution, p. 330.
3. Owen R. Lovejoy, Proceedings of National Conference of Social Work, 1919, pp. 666-7.
4. Mary E. Richmond, Ibid. 1920, p. 254.

about a man's attitude toward his life and his social relations, about his health, housing, work and recreation, there are now (1917) a dozen things to do. The power to analyze a human situation closely as distinguished from the old method of falling back upon a few general classifications, grows with the consciousness of the power to get things done."[5] This change in expectation may be seen in the nomenclature of the tasks which social work has set itself. At first "relief" was the objective, then "*adequate* relief" and now it is "rehabilitation." The methods were, first the alternatives "relief" or "corrective treatment," for there were sheep and goats in those days, then "preventive treatment" and now "adjustment."

Rehabilitation and adjustment are far more delicate and responsible matters than mere relief or even "preventive treatment" and we find social workers warning each other that "life cannot be administered by definite rules and regulations and that wisdom to deal with a man's difficulties comes only through some knowledge of his life and habits as a whole and that to treat a separate episode is almost sure to invite blundering."[6] The excuse for quoting so obvious a statement is that former practice actually required it to be made. Philanthropy took little cognizance of its supposed beneficiaries' "life and habits as a whole." Such a feat of synthetic judgment cannot of course be more than roughly approximated. It has, however, proved possible to develop a technique of inquiry, analysis, interpretation and direct or indirect remedial action which is known as social case work and can be made the subject of systematic instruction in the schools for training social workers. And within the last six years has come Miss Richmond's book with the suggestive title, "Social Diagnosis," to give a description of simple charity availing itself of the means suggested by an age of scientific experi-

5. Mary E. Richmond, Social Diagnosis, p. 29.
6. Jane Addams, Twenty Years at Hull House, p. 162.

ment and so justifying the expression, "scientific charity," which, unexplained, sounds so incongruous. The method of social case work is sometimes claimed to be the essential and distinguishing feature of social work but if we study the classic expositions of case work we find that they are describing on their own showing a *method*[7] and a method which though applicable to many types of social work is not applicable to all and which is, moreover, by no means confined to social work. Case work, in any connection, is the systematic study of all considerable effects and causes in a particular situation and the development and application of special means to alter that situation in some preferred direction. Social case work is simply case work in the form it takes when applied in social work. There are some fully accepted forms of social work which have no occasion to use it. Important as it is we must recognize it as an expedient and not social work per se.

THE INTEREST IN CAUSES

An interest in the causes of disaster is responsible for the development of those forms of social work which do not retain the immediate serviceableness of charity proper. It has developed as part of the already described attempt to systematize philanthropic service and also on an independent line of its own. "In practicaly all departments of the work of prevention" write the Webbs, " in the campaign against degeneration and in favor of promotion of better breeding; in the campaign against the ruin of adolescense, the creation of unemployment and the demoralization of the unemployed —we are always being stopped by the need for further experience and additional research. We know enough now to know how extremely important it is to increase our knowledge."[8]

This need of more knowledge after every step before the next can be taken, this constant challenge offered by our

7. See especially Mary E. Richmond, What Is Social Case Work?
8. Beatrice and Sidney Webb, The Prevention of Destitution, p. 333.

uncharted social life has caused the development of an interest in observation and investigation independent of any direct errands of mercy. Many known abuses exist which are sure to claim their victims from time to time and a certain amount of social work takes the form of an independent crusade against such abuses. This type of social work often embarks on a search for causes of trouble which proves endless and indistinguishable from the search for knowledge. A great deal of social work is now of this sort—the studies of the Russell Sage Foundation and the lesser local foundations for research and prevention, the original "Pittsburgh Survey" and all those that have followed it, the careful neighborhood studies of the settlements from the "Hull House Maps and Papers" on and the intensive group studies, studies, comparative statistics and stock takings of uncounted miscellaneous agencies. Inquiry bids fair to be as common in social work as ever alms was in charity.[9]

THE EXTENSION OF THE PHILANTHROPIC INTEREST

The extension of a philanthropic interest into new fields, the third result of scientific thoroughness and system has, bewildered us and occasioned most of the inquiry as to what social work may be. Today in the administrative departments of Federal and State governments, in the churches, the courts, the schools, the hospitals there is work being done which has a double allegiance. On the one hand it is responsible to government, religion, law, education or public health, as the case may be, and on the other it is all alike responsible to social work.

The persons who engage in this work are as much social workers as those in any traditionally philanthropic field and have simply followed persons whom they are trying to help into situations which philanthropy did not formerly consider

9. When such inquiries have been undertaken by the government they have often been proposed and prepared for by social work. See for example: Lillian D. Wald, The House on Henry Street, on the U. S. Investigation of the Condition of Women and Child Wage Earners, p. 137, N. Y. Child Labor Committee, p. 144.

to be its business. Philanthropy has long taken an interest in jails and reform schools, it has only quite recently followed into court anyone still unconvicted. This it does in the case of children and is beginning to do for some classes of adults. The social worker of the adult court is the probation officer, a representative of voluntary chivalry toward the defendant, standing in the very stronghold of implacable justice. The contrast between the points of view of criminal law and social work is clearly put by a judge in describing the function of the juvenile court. "The inquiry (in the juvenile court) is not to determine whether the child is a criminal or not, but to determine its status in relationship to its need of the care and protection of the state. Being adjudged in need of such special care the state assumes its guardianship and oversight, always for the welfare of the child. The aims and methods of the courts which administer our criminal laws proceed upon an entirely different theory. Our penal laws are enacted for the purpose of promoting the happiness and well-being of society at large, and any who violate them are termed criminals and outlawed as unfit units of society. The penalty provided for under these laws is imposed with the end in view of deterring the offender from again violating his obligation to the body politic and also of deterring others who might be like-minded."[10]

In some other fields the introduction of the social worker simply adds a new sort of service to what is already given. The obligations of both the doctor and the medical social worker are to the welfare of the patient, but their work is complementary. Often the social worker has reponsibilities no less than the doctor's but her diagnosis is of a situation and its possible interference with the curative process the doctor prescribes. She must discover and change working conditions or personal habits that tend to defeat the doctor's efforts. It is not a mere accident that this became the task of a social worker. It is not because it was no

10. Proceedings of National Conference of Social Work, 1920, p. 171.

medical job and the charitably inclined were available for it. It is because of a certain characteristic of social work which is a direct result of the single minded address to the service of need—namely, a tendency to look upon people from no point of view but that of interest in their needs, of whatever sort those needs may be. This habit of taking a *synthetic* view of their lives, if such an expression is permissible, gives exactly what was needed to complement the special and limited services of the doctor.

The same is true in the case of the social worker in the schools.[11] It is not because there is no other obvious title to give her that the school visitor is called a social worker but because her responsibility is not to the standards demanded by the school system nor to any subject of instruction but to the child himself and the need of the child in any capacity in which that need may occur. She must satisfy the need or put him in contact with others who will. The same is true of social workers employed to give suitable distribution to the benevolence of churches or who investigate for government departments or administer government services. There is abundant evidence that this concern for the individual as such is what is everywhere expected of the social worker. It is a paradox of this modern development of philanthropy that scientific method should have led away from generalization and formula and to a separation of the individual from the category and the predicament. One can pick up a "Survey" of any date and read of the social workers reviewing all sorts of data for light on the nature of individual lives. They study official records of vagrancy and extract from them information about vagrants.[12] They attempt to give relevance to Americanization work by studying the specific backgrounds of diverse foreign groups.[13]

Miss Addams writes of the settlement that "the social

11. Ibid., 1919, p. 613.
12. Charities and the Commons, April, 1907, p. 577.
13. American Year Book, 1919, p. 402.

injury of the meanest man not only becomes its concern, but by virtue of its very locality, it has put itself into a position to see, as no one but a neighbor can see, the stress and need of those who bear the brunt of the social injury." This is in a certain sense true of other forms of social work as well. Because of their interest in individual lives, and their constant response to the challenge in every sort of insufficiency and adversity they transcend the ordinary barriers of social provincialism and come to know everywhere those who bear the brunt of the social injury. The social worker seems always to be speaking for someone who has not managed as well as possible for himself, or for whom life has arranged badly, or who is not old enough or strong enough to be his own guardian. He often looks like a fool rushing in where angels might well fear to tread, but we must concede that he is doing for someone in an apparently untenable position things that only the self-sufficing can do for themselves. This synthesis of the interest of all social work in "personal" predicaments is indicated in the word "social," for our social relations are simply our relations as persons. But it seems to need further exposition because the word social has been used loosely and no longer carries clear-cut implications. A lawyer speaking to the 1919 convention defines "individual" interests as "the claims which the human being makes simply because he is a human being. For example, the claims to be secure in his reptuation and honor, in his social existence, to be secure in his belief and opinion, his spiritual existence, to be secure in his domestic relations, in his expanded individual existence and to be secure in his substance, his economic existence."[14] It will be noted that, in the attempt to define these individual interests even a superlatively able lawyer could come no nearer to legal precision than to say "for example." The concept is one which social work itself continues to alter,

14. Roscoe Pound, at National Conference, 1919, p. 105.

fill out and expand with every breath it draws and is not the less significant because it is elusive. As social work becomes more systematic with an almost technical practice, more dissociated from the specific act of relief and more widely and variously allied with the practices of other callings this personal, this "social" interest, becomes increasingly important as one of its distinguishing features.

We may recapitulate the effects of the extension of a charitable interest into new fields. The charitable interest working along scientific lines has produced what we know as social work and social work continues to manifest that interest as its characteristic feature in all the widely scattered fields to which human needs have called it. It is, first, everywhere engaged in the gratuitous extension of benefits. That is to say, it performs services which, while they may be officially sanctioned, are discretionary and adjustable, and are not considered established rights in any but the most broadly construed humanitarian sense. Secondly, it is concerned with negative conditions; not the successes but the failures interest it, not the promising people but the difficult people, not the leaders but the under-dogs. And thirdly, as social work begins to operate in close association with many other services, we see, what was always implicit in charity but now first stands out in sharp relief, a prime interest in the personal needs of individual beneficiaries. This puts social work in a new relation to public affairs for it not only stands by to gather up the human wreckage of bad management but it brings to formalized administration a constant and well-posted challenge to meet individual requirements.

THE PROPOSED DEFINITION

Diversity in social work may today be more conspicuous than likeness but under the diversity essential likeness can still be traced. Despite all appearances to the contrary it has its own department of human affairs and its universal

common interest inherited from charity and to this department of human affairs, to the service of this interest, it brings a method adopted from science.

The *department of human affairs* in which social work operates is that indicated by the word "social"; men's relations to each other rather than their relations to nature. The *interest* inherited from charity is an interest in untoward situations; social work, like charity turns like a compass to the magnet of need; opportunity, success, superiority do not attract it unless they are beset with some difficulty which it can remove; handicap, deprivation, insufficiency offer the challenge to which it responds. The *method* adopted from science is that of observation and generalization; social work has established the fact that just as man cannot live without a certain food supply, so he cannot thrive as a conscious being without a modicum of interest, incentive, and leeway of freedom, so that matters long considered intimate and implicit have now become the objects of close and deliberate observation. And just as men, endlessly varied in physical appearance are to the physiologist of one general pattern and as, far more strangely, the infinite variety of mind is known by the psychologist to have its common laws of operation, so, strangest and most illusive of all, men individually unpredicable, do yet, in the main, follow laws of social behaviour which it is in the power of an observer to detect. We can say that the main act and final object of social work are those of charity. The means and methods are those of science moving in the fields of charitable concern. Social work seems to comprise a group of allied activities called by a common name and considered to be but various phases of a single undertaking because they are all engaged in spontaneous efforts to extend benefits in response to the evidence of need; they all show a major interest in improving the social relationship of their beneficiaries and all avail themselves of scientific knowledge and employ scientific methods.

We may propose as a tentative definition, to be tested and carried further in the chapters which follow, that social work includes all voluntary attempts to extend benefits in response to need which are concerned with social relationships and which avail themselves of scientific knowledge and employ scientific methods.

CHAPTER IV

THE TESTIMONY OF THE CONFERENCE

We have now propounded a tentative definition of social work based upon an interpretation of its development and present practices. We will not be sure of the correctness of that interpretation until we have tested the applicability of the result to the whole range of social work. Nor can we do this fairly by making our own presentation of social work. For such a test we must find some ready-made presentation which will marshal social work in all its diversity. The reports of the national conference do this and, indirectly, the courses offered by the school for training social workers. This chapter will test and, if possible, expand the definition by the testimony of the conference and the succeeding chapter by the testimony of the schools.

The conference is divided into ten sections:

1. Children.
2. Delinquents.
3. Health.
4. Public agencies and institutions.
5. The family.
6. Industrial and economic problems.
7. The local community.
8. Mental hygiene.
9. Organization of social forces.
10. Uniting of native and foreign-born.

At the annual convention each of these ten sections holds its own group meetings at which papers are presented and discussions conducted on the subjects appropriate to the section. It will be seen that the division into sections is on a basis of administrative fields rather than technique or function. The fields however are not mutually exclusive

but overlapping. Children although giving their name to the whole first section appear among "delinquents" in the second, candidates for health in the third and so on. Indeed, all of the ten section names might serve as subheads under most or all of the other topics.

More significant in the search for a definition is the fact that these several fields are not exclusively possessed by social workers. "Children" are also the special concern of elementary teachers, "delinquency" is primarily referred to the courts, "health" is the conceded bailiwick of the medical profession and so forth. Even at the conference many papers are presented by persons other than social workers.[1]

These two types of overlapping make the masses of material with which we have to deal both indeterminate and confusing. But representing as they do the mutual interpenetration of social work and other callings, they give a fresh opportunity to distinguish the nature of social work. We may inquire what is the special interest of social work in "children," in "delinquents," in "health," and in what ways does it differ from the respective interests of teaching, law, medicine and so forth.

It is obviously impossible to review in readable compass the fifty years in which the conference has met and, as there have been great changes in social work during that time, it would be profitless for a contemporary definition. A new arrangement of sections was made in 1918, and therefore the reports of the years 1918, 1919, and 1920 (the last in print when this study was made) were chosen for detailed analysis.

That analysis can be most simply presented to the reader by sections, putting before him an itemized statement of the subjects covered in the reports of each section (treating the three years as a unit) and then following this sec-

1. The 1920 conference heard from four judges (three of them of juvenile courts), three college professors and one college president, a bishop, a rabbi, a governor, and a state commander of the American Legion, as well as from doctors and other professional people who occupied positions ranking as social work.

tional review with such considerations as have recommended themselves cumulatively and can only be offered on the basis of the material as a whole. We are looking for the characteristics of social work as a whole and can therefore consider only such features as continue to show themselves throughout the sections. In the following itemized lists for each section the figures represent the number of papers in which the subject indicated was the principle topic.

I. CHILDREN.

The forty-five papers presented in this section dealt with the following subjects:

Plans for removing the handicaps of the illegitimate without increasing illegitimacy	8
Recreational needs of children	7
General protective schemes, plans for extending a sheltering arm over children isolated in the country and for establishing state-wide vigilance	5
Standards for child care	4
Reports on the practices of particular localities	4
The working of children's courts	4
Nature and causes of that chronic and excessive troublesomeness which is called juvenile delinquency	3
Special psychology of children	3
Best ways of providing for children dependent on the public	2
The responsibilities of the public to its neglected children	2
Problems of day nurseries	2
Health needs of children	1

It requires but a glance at the above list to see how much wider is its range than that of a teachers' or medical men's convention. There is nothing to connect the topics—except children. This synthesis of social work in personality which has been already indicated as the "social" element in social work becomes increasingly evident in any review of the conference. As it has proved difficult of definition it will be well to keep it in mind in order that it may take shape during the following review:

II. DELINQUENTS AND CORRECTION.

Probation and parole	4
Protective work for young people	4
Special value of policewomen in protective work for girls	2
Juvenile delinquency	2
Runaway and neglected girls	1
Papers not devoted to a single subject	17

Including such considerations as the influence of war on criminality, municipal detention for women, the function of a truancy officer, the desirability of creating a public defender and the moral education of training school inmates.

III. HEALTH.

Standard of living	19
Coordination of health services	5
Special problems of health in war time	4
Housing	3
Health work among the foreign-born	3
Health problems of the Red Cross	2

IV. PUBLIC AGENCIES AND INSTITUTIONS.

Administrative questions	15
Effects of prohibition	3
State pensions for mothers	3
Pauperism	2
Control of leprosy, by colonization or otherwise	2
Such standardization of record keeping as to make the records kept by the several states comparable	2
Education of the public in their responsibility to public charges, public care for negroes, care of crippled children, care of defectives and delinquents—one paper each	4

V. THE FAMILY.

Questions of administration	1
Registration of all appeals in a social workers' exchange	3
Advantages of an orderly approach to social case analysis	3
Examples of case work treatment	3
The family	2
Marriage laws	2
Tasks growing out of war	10

Maintenance of family solidarity during absence of men, reinstatement of returned soldiers, Red Cross programs and functions of "home service."

Papers not devoted to a single topic included such subjects as:

Case work as a source of information for sociology.

Case work as contributing to democracy.

Case work as interpreting industrial problems.

Case work as serving those above the poverty line, co-operating, interpreting social work to the public, organizing the community, family budgets, thrift and pensions for widowed mothers.

VI. INDUSTRIAL AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS.

Cooperation, health insurance, British labor party program, minimum wage, soldiers' and sailors' insurance, state care of mothers and infants, inheritance, land monopoly, the position of the negro in industry, trade unions in the public service, social work and the revolution demanded by radicals, causes for the existence of the I. W. W. and economic justice.

VII. THE LOCAL COMMUNITY.

Special needs of rural communities	11
Recreational facilities of all grades	6
Americanization on a neighborhood basis	3
Effects of war on a neighborhood	1

Other papers not easily classified deal with various expedients for focussing local interest, settlements, the community store and community kitchen, the social unit plan, enlistment of the business men's interest in community progress and councils of national defence.

VIII. MENTAL HYGIENE.

State departments or societies and other organized agencies for mental hygiene	8
Training of social workers for the new task	4
Experience of the war in the care of neuroses	3
Care for the feeble-minded	3
Mental hygiene in industry	3
Mental hygiene and delinquency	2
Mental hygiene and education	1

One paper each on—

Stimulation of public interest in care for the insane, the psychiatric element in all case work, the individual versus the family as the unit of social work, social problems as

the reaction of mental types, the court's dealings with the mentally afflicted, and the relation of social work to the state's program, to hospitals, physicians, and the community in fostering mental hygiene. A few other papers present the actual lore of the new subject.

IX. THE ORGANIZATION OF SOCIAL FORCES.

Publicity for social work activities and education of the community in appreciating them 6
Impetus of the war to large scale organization for common purposes and the desirability of integrating social service 6
"War chest" 3
Registration of cases 3
Other papers treat of—
Endorsement and standardization of social work agencies, salary standards for social workers and their labor turnover and teaching materials for learners.

X. 1918—GENERAL PROBLEMS OF WAR AND RECONSTRUCTION.

Ten papers no different in import from those in other sections which have been cited as discussing conditions created by the war.

1919 and 1920—UNITING OF NATIVE AND FOREIGN-BORN IN AMERICA.

State immigrant commission, labor organizations and public education as Americanizers, the foreign language worker and foreign language press, foreign organizations and family welfare, democracy and immigration, neighborhood life, and the treatment of immigrant heritages.

Such, in briefest possible outline is the scope of the annual conference on social work. What have its papers contributed to the correction or expansion of a definition?

The first proposition of the tentative definition was that all forms of social work originated in a spontaneous effort to extend benefits. How is this affected by the testimony of the conference? In the first place it is abundantly confirmed. The conference papers deal pre-eminently with

pioneering in the extension of benefits and opportunities. The phraseology does not always suggest this but one has only to look beyond the phraseology to the action in order to find it. If we look at the first section we see it to be in effect proposing that the whole community shall deliberately and without delay rearrange not only schools and home life but industry and general living conditions so as to give to all its children opportunity and encouragement such as are now given only to the most fortunate. We find it advocating a scheme of child welfare on a county basis which shall seek out "all children in need of care for any reason" and demanding enforcement of proper health precautions for the children of unenlightened parents and a real chance in life for the illegitimate child. Among the titles of this one section at one conference appear "Progress Toward Better Laws," "Planks in a 1920 Platform," "Lessons from North Carolina," "A Community Program, etc."[2] But these platforms and programs are not to be ascribed to the community in any sense except that of being proposed for the community as a whole by social workers. At the same conference they are discussing "Social Workers as Interpreters" of social conditions and methods of getting "publicity" for their aims.[3] The same sort of title takes up the tale in the next section, a "Program" again, "Aims and Methods" twice, "A Plan," and so on throughout the conference. Although other professions, education and medicine for example, are constantly busy jacking up standards, their general undertakings are fully accepted. For all regular purveyances of education and medicine the community has given a blanket order and expects to pay "within reason." Social work is in a different case for it is constantly trying to put over something which is still but tentatively and experimentally accepted and depends root and branch on the willingness of some people to do, out of hand, for others.[4]

2. Conference, 1919, pp. 111, 123, 133, 136.
3. Ibid. 1920, pp. 271 and 278.
4. Ibid. pp. 188, 111, 129, 135 and 298.

The president of the conference in 1920 referred to a "belief in human improvableness and a willingness to tackle the job."[5] That is as far as the conference usually philosophises in this direction. And this is the sort of phraseology that makes one forget that social work is extending benefits—this casual reference to tackling the job. It is another of the paradoxes in the development of social work (we have already noted science rescuing personality), that when charity offered only a minimum of rough food, uniform raiment and herded shelter to the utterly destitute there was much made of the generosity of the donor, but now when social work has been carried to a point where it often provides for the handicapped a great deal better than the rank and file manage to provide for themselves it is taken to be a case of noblesse oblige.

We may read in the "Observations of a Philanthropist" penned a century ago that "It's greatly for the interests of charity that the objects of it should be respectful and grateful. We think our kindness in a manner repaid when it is thankfully received; it's a pleasure then to have done it and an incitement to do more,"[6] or in a "hospital" report that "the number of proper objects are amply sufficient to employ the bounty of the rich."[7]

The difference here indicated is not accounted for by the fact that these were the observations of philanthropists while the conference is composed of professional social workers for whom benefaction is all in the day's work. As has been already indicated, the papers read at the conference are not all by social workers. Furthermore, the "incitement" now employed to get from all manner of men financial support for the undertakings of social work is of a very different order. Let any one consider the appeals which come to his desk. They contain little to rouse his vanity and the offer of an opportunity to acquire merit is

5. Ibid. p. 4.
6. History of English Philanthropy, p. 269.
7. Ibid., p. 273.

almost as uncommon. The degree of need and the certainty of accomplishment are the things never omitted.

This suggests the cause for change. A century ago need might equally well have been urged, but what could then have been promised of accomplishment? All that was then expected was surcease of the hour's suffering. That is a fit subject of congratulation as when a complaisant philanthropist wrote of the London of his time there "is not a disease that can afflict human nature nor a want which the varying conditions of man can require but finds an open asylum, a resort ready prepared with the needful accommodation for reception, comfort, instruction and cure, and with the exception of a few cases entirely free of expense."[8]

But what is that compared with the great modern adventure of eliminating poverty and holding disease at bay? Science has brought to charity faith and hope in terrestrial terms. The historian who unearthed the above statement remarks, "In theory, society consists of a large number of charitable people; in fact the number of those who can be properly so described is a small one. The few who are really in earnest in their desire to alleviate distress even at the cost of considerable expenditure of time and money, are surrounded by a multitude of persons who are willing to assist but only provided they can do so at no great inconvenience to themselves. This lower power of sympathy passes gradually through the stages of languid interest to complete indifference."[9]

Modern social work is no longer dependent on the appeal to "sympathy" alone. It has a wide range of interest and through its practical application of the various social sciences it associates itself with all our hopes of progress. Expectation not only to mitigate the effects of calamity but to prevent its recurrence gives social work a claim on public attention which charity never had.

8. Ibid., p. 271, referring to the opening of the 18th century.
9. Ibid., p. 266.

Along with this change in expectation goes naturally a change in attitude toward the beneficiaries of social work. "There can be no line of cleavage in the advancement of public sentiment between the development of the general social agencies such as church and school and the more intensive forms which we have come to know as social work."[10] The old view of society saw many staunch persons standing on their own feet and a few weak brethren or victimized who needed support. But the view implied in this quotation recognizes an interpendence among all the members of society, an interdependence of which the particular predicament of those who happen to be in need of social work is merely an incident.

But the speakers at the conference go still further. "So long as there are human frailties there will be need of social workers. But let us not forget that the larger vision of social work contemplates not charity alone but justice, and all social ills arising from environment are man-made and therefore changeable."[11] If the beneficiaries of social work are thus counted scapegoats for us all, being victims of social injustice, then every act of prevention (and we have said that all social work is now at some remove preventive) is for the general safety and no more than a proper self-defence. Social work now resents the smugness that can represent as especially disinterested any service to those who have been paying the penalty of blunders or iniquities for which the prosperous may be equally responsible. It is only justice to them or less and it is sound policy for all. No wonder social work will not stand to be considered charity! It considers its preoccupation with the backwaters of race progress to show no gracious condescension on its part—merely an appreciation of the extent and importance of the backwaters.

But all this shows social work more than ever spontan-

10. Conference, 1920, p. 74.
11. Ibid., p. 77.

eous and gratuitous, for it does not work for even a heavenly reward; and it must, unadmonished, stir the community to support the work it sets itself to perform. It is only the old condescension that has gone. The extension of benefits remains, but has become something constructive and collectivistic.

Such a change in attitude toward benefaction would necessarily affect the second criterion of social work proposed in our tentative definition—its incidence in response to need. What is the testimony of the conference on this second criterion? The analysis of subjects dealt with in the first section reads "plans for removing '*handicaps*,'" recreational *needs*," "*protective* schemes," "standards for child *care*," "nature and causes of *delinquency*," "providing for children *dependent* on the public," "responsibilities to *neglected* children," "health *needs*." Two subjects, which as given, do not commit themselves on the question of need complete the list. In the second section the persons under consideration are by definition subject to some sort of provision and control. They are delinquents. But that the interest of the social workers is especially in fostering and guarding them is shown by the fact that young people's need of protection is the subject of six papers, juvenile delinquency of two, runaway and neglected girls of one more, while the rest deal with adjustment of treatment to the needs of older offenders, with probation, parole, education and the form of detention desirable in a given case. The third section deals entirely with standards of living in relation to disease conditions, and with means of extending medical service. The remaining seven sections continue to show need as the occasion of social work, but it is a sublimated sort of need which would be much misrepresented by any classification of the beneficiaries as "needy." The whole level of interest has passed above and beyond that.

As has been already indicated discussion turns on "programs," "plans," "standards," and it is in a positive and

anticipatory vein as by people embarked on a constructive undertaking. The note of initial accomplishment is most clearly struck in the "local community" division with such titles as "The Boy Scout and Community Building," "Organization of Games and Athletics in Rural Communities," "Signs of Rural Hope," etc. But turn to the context and you will read, "The Scout program recognizes the need of the boy for a recreational program for his unused time which at the same time is educational. Scouting also recognizes the need that the man has, etc."[12] The neglected rural situation, the poverty of interest in some neighborhoods—these are what have drawn social work to undertakings that carry no hint of remedy in the expression given their objects.

In a dynamically conceived society it is hard to say where remedy shades into prevention and prevention into construction. Prevention of disaster not only involves the maintenance of continuously good conditions but the anticipation of wants. If we are not to have juvenile delinquency boys must have some chance for wholesome recreation. If we would avoid bad housing we must arrange betimes a good city plan preserving open spaces where they will be wanted later and developing each type of building in a neighborhood where it need not be soon perverted to a use for which it was not intended and will not be well adapted.

Dr. Simon Patten contended that the present productivity of the world was such as to free mankind from any fear of general dearth and cause all our prospects to be potentially in terms of abundance and not of want, to rescue us from the old "pain economy" of insufficiency and give us a "pleasure economy" on a safe margin of sufficiency. Under these circumstances, he said, "world riches may replace the living sacrifice and become the social contrivance that lowers human costs and we must cease to think that the

12. Ibid., p. 267.

anguish of the sentient creature is compensated by the development of moral qualities which merely reconcile man to repeating the experience of suffering."[13] Social work has already ceased to think in that fashion and is working in the spirit of a pleasure economy so that the terminology of need is no longer pre-eminent. "There are times when self-sacrificing zeal is demanded and all honor to those who then devote or lose themselves in service. That is only one side of it. The need of sacrifice is always a reflection on the men or circumstances calling for it."[14] That is the view of modern social work, the frame of mind in which it sets about its work. It talks about what has to be done as a matter of course and is chiefly concerned with the best way of doing it. It is beginning to outgrow "sob stories" even in asking support from an indifferent public—they set too low a standard of toleration and there are some modern social workers who turn from them abashed, as from dallying with an outrage beneath endurance. The battle ground of reform must be on another plain where the initiated see danger but the complaisant still need convincing.

"When once the worst is gone the second best becomes intolerable." Gray, the historian of English philanthropy, describes the effective philanthropist as the ideal agitator, "It is his to discover those larger ends of common welfare which reach beyond the moral perceptiveness of ordinary men in their ordinary moods. He is, as it were, an explorer in the unmapped world of the ideal life from whence he brings back news of an unreached good, such tidings as sound like travelers' tales in our ears, but which haunt the mind of men until they seek to verify the story by a practical policy calculated to transform the actual. Only it must be observed that the most daring speculator cannot move very far from his base and the wildest Utopia is de-

13. The New Basis of Civilization, p. 55.
14. Philanthropy and the State, p. 235.

termined by the conditions of its year of publication."[15]

"I hold," said Dr. Southard to the 1919 conference, "whatever the ideal order, the practical order of work called social work begins with the eradication of evil. It may sound better to sow goodness or to transplant goodness, or even to graft goodness in the eager social world, and beautiful little gardens of Eden or smaller cases of goodness can be shown here and there to the social visitor —nevertheless, I hold, with the prejudice of a physician perhaps, the eradications of evil are more in the first order of our work than disseminations, transplantations, and grafts of goodness. At any rate, if there be anything at all in the millennial hopes and ingrained optimisms of Spencerian evolution, it is plain that by and large we are putting evil behind us and arriving at goodness by a clever technique of successful destruction."[16] This "eradication of evil" may, as one side of the "technique" of evolution, operate in the terms of any developing organization; but in terms of eradication of evil, not in its own functioning or its subject, but in the conditions of its object it is not common outside of social work. It is not to be found in the business world where all purveyance shuns the applicant most in need of its wares and seeks the one best able to pay. It is not to be found in the law, which tries to hold the scales even to all comers. It is only slightly and intermittently in state-craft which while it is coming more and more to inhibit abuse of the helpless does still, from an age-old sense of security in the alliance with wealth and power, bend its constructive energies to encouragement of the prosperous. It is not even in education, which constantly tends to provide in each school grade teaching suitable for those who will have longest to study and is only importuned by demands from *outside* to cater in the lower grades to those who must get in them all the education they

15. Ibid., p. 302.
16. Conference, 1919, p. 583.

are ever to have. Social work stands alone in its purely personal championship of the less secure in prosperity. It is in its enormous demands for them that it seems to have turned to purely constructive things.

It is indeed possible that along the lines of prevention social work is developing a function which is positive in the same sense as hygiene is positive in the field of medicine and that social work will, to that extent, independently "plant good" as well as "eradicate evil." But it is also possible, and in the light of past developments more probable, that any constructive phase of social work which proves permanent should come to be looked on as a routine purveyance and no longer considered social work. This we have already seen to have happened in the case of free education and many other things.

The conference has thus confirmed and filled out the elementary features of social work which it inherits from charity, voluntary benefaction and response to need. What does it have to say of the qualifying features that have transformed charity into social work—the emergence of the individual as the only and sufficient nexus for its services and the adoption of scientific guidance?

The first of these has already been touched on in relation to the first section. Throughout the second the discussion all bears on the prevention of delinquency or the care of delinquents. There is not much discussion of pure justice, the burden of the argument is all that we should "approach every individual prisoner with conscientious determination to give him the best service of which we are capable, realizing that his future is largely in our hands."[17] A public defender is asked for "in order that every person accused, no matter how poor, may have a full and fair trial."[18] And for sentenced prisoners social work asks something more than mere detention, "we used to look upon them, in the

17. Ibid., 1918, p. 147.
18. Ibid., p. 171.

stage of repression, en masse. * * * Instead of committing a man to a particular institution he is now committed to the custody of a board of control * * * to be examined * * * to determine just where he will fit into school or industry. The man will be assigned by his board, to the particular prison to which he is best suited for mental and physical treatment."[19] "If a child who is mentally sound comes into court with a mind bent on the commission of some offence he should be sent to a special school having for its purpose the education of such children. Let the great departments of psychology and sociology of our colleges and universities devise a course of instruction and education that will reclaim a juvenile delinquent who is mentally and physically sound"[20] and "we should extend the methods developed in the Children's Courts to apply to all ages, wiping out our arbitrary age line by improving the treatment of the older groups."[21]

It is in this section that there appears at its plainest the paradox that the questions purely dependent on what we call personality are questions of social relationship and all genuinely social questions are questions of personal life. A public policy is justified in terms of personal benefit but interest is claimed for personal difficulties on the ground that they illuminate public issues.

The third division is one that speaks quite unequivocally concerning the nature of social work, for there is an old and kindly profession already established in this field and social work must justify its own entrance there. All of the subjects in this health section are of interest to the doctor as well as the social worker, but for the doctor they throw light on the causes and cures of disease, for the social worker they are a point of departure for active work to establish better standards of living. Nineteen of the papers presented deal specifically with that subject. Five

19. Ibid., 1919, p. 100.
20. Ibid., 1918, p. 126.
21. Ibid., p. 136.

more deal with the co-ordination of various health agencies—a task in social engineering. One speaker, himself a physician, reports no less than ten agencies united in efforts to improve a city's health. Only four of these (the board of health, the hospital, the tuberculosis society and the medical profession) were permanently concerned with health. The other six, the schools, the park department, the city statistics department, the industries, insurance companies and churches were enlisted, as the context shows, as so many agents establishing connections with the individual beneficiaries of the campaign. The work of choosing them and enlisting their co-operation demanded a knowledge of social not of physiological conditions.

In the next section, that devoted to public agencies and institutions, the conspicuous fact is that social work does not forget that public care is for private people. It hardly seems necessary to quote from all the sections even in pursuit of this most elusive of the characteristics of social work. One more citation will be enough. "We social workers have our contribution to make to that ultimate attainment of democracy which must be wrought out, not in uniformity but in diversity, not only in the right of man to individual freedom but in his ability to enter into that right."[22]

The extension of the sense of public responsibility, the realization that reform must come in all the interlocking activities of a highly organized business, political and social life has tempted some people to think that the days of social work are numbered or to seek out for it some highly specialized or recondite function. But if we are right in ascribing to it this function of challenging all forms of service to reach and satisfy individual needs it may be more important in the future than in the past. Wholesale and collectivist methods call for constant adaptation of general means to particular cases and the more we give of govern-

22. Conference, 1918, p. 287.

ment service the more we may need of social work. The more varied our health service, the more flexible and extensible our educational opportunities, the more occasions there will be for adjustment. Such follow-up work as is done by hospitals and by the workmen's compensation office, the work of the mothers' assistance fund, of the voluntary experiments in special nutrition classes, vocational guidance, and scholarships for trade school attendance, are only a few examples of the kind of thing social work branches into as established agencies extend their own responsibilities.

The fact that social work rescues people who fall through the meshes of the school system, people dismissed from clinical treatment only to return to a regimen bound to revive their troubles, that it discovers the round pegs in square holes and the neglected groups and anomalous cases has caused other people to see it as all converging in a liaison work which shall ultimately be all there is left for it to perform and which shall be in essence social case work. From what has already been said it will be evident that there is no reason to think that social work which has been so prolific of criticism of our established institutions and a pioneer in experiment should cease to exercise this function, which is as infinite in possibilities as the life of man itself, or even that it will cease to work along lines of inquiry or of group work. That little word "social" opens up the possibilities of all the permutations and combinations in human consciousness. The conference at least hints that social work knows it.

And what of the method by which social work is to be conducted. Is it, as the tentative definition said, suggested by the social sciences? There is not a great deal of explicit reference to social science, but the concepts of economics, social psychology and sociology are constantly in evidence and even political science has its say in an "engineering" conception of the state, in definitions of democracy and in criteria of progress. The almost complete disap-

pearance of the question of relative responsibility of the individual and society which morality and philosophy have debated in so many forms testifies to assimilation of the sociological concept of social life as an integration of individual lives rather than an aggregation and of the individual life as no digit but an incident " * * * time moves swiftly in the social field and the special knowledge of today easily becomes the common knowledge of tomorrow."[23] And after all that has been said in the preceding pages of the obvious effects of a scientific method and scientific attitude in making social work what the conference shows it to be it scarcely remains to prove or even argue the confirmation, the reinforcement, the expansion of the last qualification of social work.

Nine round-table conferences and five committee reports, in addition to the papers presenting concrete programs and reports of local experiments testify to the careful checking up of method. The constant references to programs, standards and experience, to records and the search for causes, the emphasis on prevention and the patient, objective, therapeutic attitude of the social worker all testify to the conquest of the field by science. But the completeness and significance of that conquest are plainest in the ever-present, implicit but unmistakable assumption that all the undertakings discussed are parts of a systematically coordinated campaign based upon continuing observation of cause and effect.

Thus have the reports of the conference confirmed and filled out the tentative definition. But the analysis did not cull from them any fresh characteristics of social work. Their mass of commentary, aimed, as it seemed, in all possible directions, would suggest no testimony except in answer to leading questions and we will have to be satisfied with such expansion of the definition as, while adding no

23. R. W. Kelso, American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 22, No. 1.

new terms, commits the already proposed items to more significant implications. The definition so expanded must be passed on, for challenge or alteration by the evidence of the training schools.

CHAPTER V

THE TESTIMONY OF THE SCHOOLS

There are some fifteen schools for the training of social workers,[1] independent institutions or university departments. The younger among them have not followed at all closely the organization or practices of the older[2] and all work in close co-operation with local social work agencies, farming their students out with these for practice work and drawing lecturers from the agency staffs. The varied curricula of the schools seem therefore to offer direct evidence of what is considered in their respective regions, the most necessary equipment for social workers.

Only three school catalogues venture any characterization of the tasks for which their courses equip. Toronto gives the most inclusive. "The sense of social obligation and interdependence has grown greater as our social life has grown more complex. The more social conditions have been studied, the more apparent has it become that many of our worst evils are due to the lack of the science which should direct and stimulate the sense of our solidarity. In recent years governments, municipal and other authorities, industrial corporations and voluntary associations of all kinds have been compelled to make ever-extending provisions for industrial protection, social insurance, public health service, housing improvement, recreation and various other forms of organized social effort. All these activities have created the sphere of a new profession, that of the trained social worker." Here are the familiar "sense

1. For a list of schools see the Appendix. The list comprises the membership of the "Association of Training Schools for Professional Social Workers," organized 1919.
2. All information in this chapter is from the school catalogues for the years 1920-21 or 1921-22 (the latest available when this study was begun) or from correspondence with the schools.

of social obligation," the reference to a "science which should direct and stimluate this sense," the "*ever-extending* provisions" prompted by it and, unmentioned but obviously implicit, a constant concern with things subject to amelioration: "protection," "insurance," "service," "improvement," "recreation"—these are the substantives in its main statement. The Ohio catalogue itemizes the demands of social service on a training school[3] but the only generalization to be deduced from the list is that they all imply a purpose of rescue or amelioration. The Simmons characterization confines itself entirely to emphasizing the implications of the word "social"[4] and the Missouri school opens its catalogue with the discouraging statement that "it is impossible at the present time to construct a satisfactory definition of social work."

This exhausts the slender sheaf of direct comment. For further enlightenment we must analyse the offered equipment itself. The nature of the training given will predict the nature of the work expected to follow. There are a great many courses offered and the variety not of nomenclature only but of apparent content is enough for bewilderment. Classification of the courses according to the type of preparation they seem to offer does however sort them into three main groups.

A. Courses which introduce the student to the social sciences and the methods and concepts on which these rest.

B. Courses which offer information on the field of social work both past and present.

3. Social service "calls for a knowledge of the principles of social organization, the conditions which cause poverty and may lead to dependency, the social and psychological factors involved in the training of youth, the methods of promoting thrift and independence among the laboring classes, the many experiments which have been made in the field of social legislation and the relations between these various theories and activities."

4. "The purpose of the School of Social Work is to give professional training in the art of adjusting personal relations. Social workers also have to do with food, clothing, shelter, and medical attention, but these are incidental to their main work of adjusting differences which arise in the relations between people, e.g., between school authorities and parents and parents and pupils, between family and community."

C. Courses which equip specifically for certain social work tasks.

In the first group, that of courses introducing the student to the social sciences, their methods and concepts, fall sociology courses of various sorts, courses in (1) general sociology, (2) the history of institutions, (3) theories of social progress, (4) the value of norms of income and opportunity for a given level of civilization, (5) the means of "social control." Here also belong courses in (6) general psychology, (7) social psychology, (8) statistics and (9) economics.

In the second group, that of courses offering information on the general field of social work, fall courses on (1) the nature and mutual relations of contemporary social work undertakings, (2) the history of philanthropy and (3) current social problems. Here ought also to be put (4) the courses offered by five schools in the causes of poverty, because poverty has been an age-long challenge to philanthropy and is still the proximate occasion for a great part of social work.

For the third group are left courses in about forty subjects pertaining to special fields or special methods. These subjects overlap and interchange material but yield to classification as preparatory for work in eight or nine fairly distinguishable fields.

1. Work in the interest of the public health, mental or physical.
2. Organization of community groups on various scales in both urban and rural areas.
3. Work in connection with industry.
4. Work in the interest of children.
5. Work with people socially handicapped because of race or recent immigration.
6. Work in connection with the enactment or administration of social legislation.
7. Work with defectives.
8. Housing.

A ninth field may be made of social case work, as when it

appears under such titles as "family rehabilitation," but it must also be recognized as a technique more or less utilized in six of the eight other fields. There remain a few other technical courses such as those in record keeping.

The schools, all but four,[5] arrange their courses in departments varying in number from two to ten. Altogether seventeen different fields are indicated by the several schools and under them are variously grouped the forty subjects taught.[6] These very involved curricula dealing, as they do, in such staggering propositions as the nature of progress and the causes of poverty, and seeming in their explicit statements unanimous in nothing which might serve the cause of definition do give certain collective testimony.

In the first place they are agreed that social work comprises a variety of separate callings demanding differential training. The differential training is not the result of specialization after receiving a common training. Most schools while requiring a certain amount of common background for all students recognize no general course and require every student to enroll in one or another department.

Secondly, in making a great deal of elective work interchangeable among the special courses and requiring certain prerequisites for all courses alike they all recognize a close relation between the various branches of social work.

Thirdly, they show that the work they prepare for is not "social" in the merely vague sense of having a public interest. It is social in the specific sense of dealing with people in their relations to other people. Its prerequisite is not physiology, the science of that part of man which can develope in isolation, but psychology, the science of intelligence which developes only in contact with other intelligences. We can see this in the contrast between the

5. Four schools which are integral parts of universities with many of the courses their students are expected to take organized as parts of other departments are not divided as are the independently organized schools and those whose college connection is not so involved.

6. For list see Appendix II, C.

training given in a medical school and that given in a school for social workers. The former teaches a great deal about man's physical make-up and its hazards but very little about his mental make-up: while the latter may teach enough of sanitary practice to understand a doctor's directions, almost always teaches something of mental life and always a great deal about social settings and the available means of improving them. This "social" interest is constant throughout the schools. The courses in industry, for example, do not teach efficiency engineering or price fixing but personnel management and other matters presumably ministering directly to the well being of the workers. These schools do not equip for the advancement of any particular science. Philosophy and art of any sort enter them only as casual visitors. They teach in the name of no single creed and formulate no specific purpose. Despite their enormous array of topics their interest remains essentially personal.

Fourthly, the schools are more or less consciously training crusaders. The word "problem" is in frequent use. It is freely applied to difficulties not outstandingly problematical and its use in place of any harsher or less hopeful word indicates the notion of arming rescuers with a solution. The word "standard" with its implication of something attainable but not always attained, "prevention," "service," "welfare," "relief," "correction," "treatment," appear thickly scattered among the subject titles and one is surely justified in inferring that to make changes for the better is not to be for the social worker as for most men a rare bright spot in the routine of labor, but his very stock-in-trade and justification for existence.

Lastly, the requirement of a certain amount of study of the social sciences followed by methodical training in special lines, together with supervised practice work after the manner of a technical school, testifies to the important parts played in the preparation of social workers by both scien-

tific method and the lore of the social sciences.

Beyond this it does not seem safe to generalise. These five conclusions about social work indicated by the school catalogues suggest that it is an alliance of distinct but closely related callings furthering "social" welfare in a quite specific sense. Secondly, they imply that the social worker is a rescuer and champion equipped for his tilt from the armory of the social sciences. Does not this come to about the same thing as is described in our tentative definition, a group of activities looked upon as so many phases of a single undertaking because they all attempt to extend benefits in response to a need; are all concerned with social relationships; and all avail themselves of scientific knowledge and employ scientific methods.

The schools then, like the conference, confirm the tentative definition but do not expand it by the addition of any new terms. It is possible that social work as a whole has no more common features. But it is, of course, also possible that other features could be found if we had some fresh clue to them. The present study, having put all its leading questions must again content itself with adding to the already accepted terms of the definition such further implications as the curricula suggest—and again we find these implications to come from the use of science for philanthropic purposes.

The courses most commonly "required" for all students in the schools are those treating the social sciences. What do these offer to the incipient social worker? The courses in sociology—especially those which thirteen of the schools offer in the history of certain institutions or in race comparisons—give perspective. They show institutions changing in form and function. They show ideas of right changing as the institutions change, temporary institutions conditioning our lives even in the matters a layman supposes instinctive. They force a student to look outside the setting of custom and creed into which, like every other

man, he has been born. They show him the provincialism of sweeping judgements pronounced on the basis of sectional, sectarian or class standards. They teach him in a professional capacity (if in no other) to recognize varieties of good. Yet all the while they are making possible a simpler and more objectified conception of individuality than it is easy for the uninstructed to entertain. We look with something very like amusement on the animistic and anthropomorphic views of natural phenomena entertained by primitive men and yet we are only just beginning to realize that the subjective interpretations and moral judgments with which we have so long been satisfied in respect to humanity are equally arbitrary and deductive and that man also is, up to a certain point a natural phenomenon to be inductively considered. In such perspective praise and blame become to many issues irrelevant and we begin soberly to reckon the possibilities of education in the compass of individual lifetimes.

Psychology, after sociology the science most frequently taught in the schools, pushes further the process sociology began. It shows that our most intimate convictions are not axiomatic. It shows the thought that is our very selves to be half the creation of others, and makes the question of individual blameworthiness a merely practical one of what forces are to be reckoned with in a given situation.

The third of the general sciences taught is statistics, the language of collective fact. By discovering norms it shows danger lines. It tells what food and what air and what income are necessary to support life in an average individual and what degree of development is usual in a child of a given age and what degree of intelligence suffices to keep people out of trouble without the protection of a guardian. It gives the charitably inclined hard facts with which to face the indifferent and firm ground to stand on in demanding reform. At first sight it looks like a means

to intolerable regimentation but rightly used it is a charter of freedom. Given a knowledge of the margin of safety we can make a concerted attack on substandard conditions while allowing indefinite variation above the danger line and the mere nonconformist need not be dreaded or attacked for simple nonconformity.

Thus may courses in social science give to many a raw recruit of social work grounds for acting with the tolerance, the respect for individuals, the single and unaccusing eye on present and future possibilities which their elders and maybe betters had (when they had them at all) as the rare and not to be commanded gifts of sheer humanity and wisdom.

Here is the contribution of science to social work which touches its vital center, refines the very impulse that animates it, as it animated its predecessors and keeps it true to form among the distractions of technical formality. No study can produce imagination, sympathy, generosity or good taste any more than it can give a student a better brain, but what it can do is to give to persons of only average perspicacity and humanity the understanding to act with some degree of intelligence and consideration where the untrained average person would make cruel and disastrous blunders.

The tentative definition of social work which we sought to test and add to by the testimony of conference and school curricula has gained no fresh terms but it has gained in significance and, taken together with all its implications, makes of social work something thoroughly definitive and characteristic. But the definition was wanted for practical purposes and before dropping the subject it will be necessary to inquire whether it can in any degree serve them.

CHAPTER VI

THE ANSWER TO ITS CRITICS

At the beginning of this study it was said that a definition of social work was in demand for practical use. We have developed a definition which seems to hold good as far as it goes. We have said that social work includes all voluntary attempts to extend benefits in response to a need, which are concerned with social relationships and which avail themselves of scientific knowledge and employ scientific methods. It remains to test whether this is sufficiently descriptive and sufficiently definitive to be of any practical use. Is it inclusive enough to allow social work to claim all its legitimate functions and exclusive enough to rescue it from unreasonable demands? These things can only be tested by trying it out in discussion. It is therefore the purpose of this chapter to attempt such a trial by assuming that social work is no more and no less than the definition indicates and requiring it, on this representation, to run the gauntlet of familiar criticism.

Up to the present time social work has not been the subject of much serious analytical comment. It has been too inchoate for that. But a sort of guerilla warfare of criticism pursues it in private conversation, on public platforms and in the obiter dicta of current literature. The criticisms are of three principal sorts, those which say that what it does is somehow unworthy, those which say it does too much and those which say it does too little; or, more fully stated, those which charge it with an unwholesome interest in wanting to play providence to other people, those which think it is attempting something in defiance of the laws of nature and those which scorn it for tinkering

with abuses which should be fallen upon and annihilated.

In the first group may be classed the view of people who find the world well enough as it is and think that social workers stir up hornets' nests from sheer meddlesomeness and love of power. As this belief never survives any considerable acquaintance with social work or any but very provincial knowledge of the world it need not be discussed. More considerable is the criticism of those who object to social work because they think that to make demands in the interest of other people is patronizing or sentimental or both. They think that the people might possibly ask very different things of life from those which the social worker asks for them; that if the social worker wishes to help them he should confine himself to seconding their motions; that an outsider and mere witness of an abuse who has never felt its weight is not the one to draw up its indictment or to prescribe a remedy. But their objection is not altogether on these grounds. Even when social work makes the same demands as its clients have made for themselves the irreconcilables continue to denounce it for undue interference. Some of them, to be sure, think that while self-respecting people are asking their plain rights in their own name and that of justice social work makes it easy for the community to neglect their demands and yet salve its conscience by supporting such benefactions as it finds convenient. But this last belongs with the next group of criticisms and must be answered along with them. We are for the moment concerned only with the strange but apparently rooted belief that there must be something spurious about a movement in which people are not speaking for themselves.

It is evident that even people who commend social work, often do so patronizingly as though it were something not to be taken very seriously because it is not self-supporting and cannot claim the great, humdrum, unchallengeable sanction of self interest. Moreover people in border-line occu-

pations when referred to as social workers will repudiate the name as though it might discredit their work by taking it out of the busy wholesome world of fair exchanges and putting it in a world of patronage and possible hypocrisy. Men advocating industrial welfare work are commonly not satisfied to claim that it pays for itself and will be no expense to the business that installs it, but assert with an air of rescuing it from suspicion, that it results in a net profit to the man who puts it in and is therefore "not sentiment" but "good business." Those who, though themselves not originally industrial workers, go into the labor movement, very frequently pour scorn on the social worker while feeling themselves safe from corrupting condescension in a company that is only asking for its own rights.

The element of justice in the charge does not need to be pointed out. Bernard Shaw has warned us against doing unto others as we would have them do unto us for fear they may not like it. But for members of a gregarious species some tolerance of ministration seems unavoidable. Within the labor movement itself those with a margin of time and energy are constantly acting in the interest of those who have none. We all begin life with several years of sheer dependance on the altruism of our elders and if we live long enough come again to some form of dependance. As we look back on the slow mitigation of man's inhumanity to man there seems at least good ground for putting the burden of proof on those who scorn all benevolent interference. We have already noticed that what passes in one generation for special interest in the fortunes of others seems to a later time plain obligation.

"Almost every law on the statute books," says a historian, in reference to protective legislation, "was forced upon the legislature by the disconcerting zeal of a few enthusiasts. We marvel at the slight concessions to humanity which satisfied them, we should rather admire

the originality which led them to denounce cruel and oppressive conditions which had satisfied the legislature and against which their victims had not always turned."[1] There is the crux of the matter—the victims will not, cannot always turn. In the palmy days of utilitarianism when the opposition to doing for others was felt with the mighty impact of which the present vague distrust is the last faint ripple fading across the public mind, Mill himself will be found writing that although it can be stated as a general rule "that most persons take a juster and more intelligent view of their own interest, and of the means of promoting it, than can either be prescribed to them by a general enactment of the legislature, or pointed out in the particular case by a public functionary" nevertheless "there is no difficulty in perceiving some very large and conspicuous exceptions to it."[2] And among these exceptions he proceeds to enumerate protection of persons incapable of judging or acting for themselves whether from defective intelligence or immaturity, and the protection offered by labor legislation and by public charity. Elsewhere he also remarks, "Those who most need to be made wiser and better commonly desire it least, and if they desired it would be incapable of finding the way to it by their own lights."[3]

It could probably be shown that the great bulk of social work acts in the interest of people unable to speak for themselves or vaguely wanting something they cannot find "the way to by their own lights." But victimization and helplessness are entirely relative matters and social work is prepared boldly to extend benefits wherever they are wanted.

Science has now laid a broad road and is leading the plodding crowd where the keen feet of Pegasus have always carried the subtle minded, whatever the contemporary creed. "Darwin" writes a popular social psychologist "in

1. Philanthropy and the State, p. 303.
2. John Stuart Mill, Principles of Political Economy, p. 577.
3. Ibid., p. 575.

the *Descent of Man* (1871) first enunciated the true doctrine of human motives, and showed how we must proceed, relying chiefly upon the comparative and natural history method, if we would arrive at a fuller understanding of them. * * * Social Psychology has to show how, given the native propensities and capacities of the individual human mind, all the complex mental life of societies is shaped by them and in turn reacts upon the course of their development and operation in the individual. * * * The fundamental problem of social psychology is moralization of the individual by the society into which he is born as a creature in which the non-moral and purely egoistic tendencies are so much stronger than any altruistic tendencies."[4] That is to say the problem which social psychology must solve is the problem of how this moralization is brought about. The significance of such doctrine for social work is in its entire discrediting of any naïve individualism and its indication that man being an animal that lives not solitary but in groups some form and degree of interdependance is, for him, in the first order of nature. The interests and inclinations corrollary to that interdependence are inescapable for him.

If this is the case objection to the social work we have defined could not be "on principle" but must be to special forms of service on specific grounds of inexpediency or because of the manner or quality of the service. Although it is the manner and quality of service which make the social work of any given time and place what it is they are nevertheless incidentals entirely separable from its nature and principles. Objections are brought on specific grounds of expediency by those who claim that social work does too much and these objections will be considered in their turn. Objection is also made to the manner and quality of the social workers' services and it is this objection which really animates the charge against the altruism of social work.

4. William McDougal, An Introduction to Social Psychology, p. 14, et seq.

This study is an analysis of the nature and functions, not the performance of social work. It must, however, consider a general objection to the nature and quality of the social workers' services which so often passes for an objection to social work itself.

This vague distrust of social work which we have just been considering, this dislike of it as something sentimental or undemocratic, is really a dislike of these incidentals which social work has a perfect right to disclaim if it can. It is a moral and aesthetic repulsion, an aversion for the sort of thing which social work sometimes seems to be.

It is social case work that is most open not only to misunderstanding but to abuse. In it social work is especially liable to the defects of its qualities. People who take for granted the social work that is done in connection with the courts, the schools, institutions dealing with defectives and in many other connections without troubling to consider what it is they are accepting and even relying upon, will, because of what they think social case work to be, pour scorn upon "uplifters" and social workers generally.

The social case workers' professional contribution to a situation consists in doing whatever she does in conscious relation to a general situation, in the ease of her contacts and the range of her resources.[5] There is no limit to the knowledge of a situation which it may be useful for her to have. A speaker addressing the first students in the New York School of Philanthropy is on record as referring to "investigation" as a necessary evil which must be bravely faced and telling them they must always make it plain that "the person in distress has asked you to help him and that you *mean* to help him, to help his soul and not only to feed his miserable body, and that you cannot help him unless you do *know all about* him."[6] Of course that is to give an ell when an inch is asked for—and an ell of very different stuff. The statement was made twenty-five years ago

5. Porter R. Lee, at the National Conference of Social Work, 1920, p. 468.
6. Charities Review, 1898, p. 9.

and is not given here as typical either of this time or that, but as an instance of the sort of thing which is said and passed on and resented, all in good faith. Obviously the more the case worker knows, provided she can understand it, the better she can do her work. But because of the very real requirement to employ trained workers and the rapid expansion of the profession young people are employed as fast as the schools will grind them out. And when social work lets loose on difficult situations people disqualified for dealing with them by their youth or inexperience or native incapacity or all three it must expect its reputation to suffer. But, taken at the best, there is great presumption in the attempt of one mortal life to analyze and prescribe for the totality of another. A too nice matching up of the inferential motive with the act to be accounted for, a too meticulous testing for the qualities presumed necessary for a certain degree of self direction, entail a veritable invasion of one life by another. It is hard for the analytical to remember that any explanation, no matter how true and inclusive, is only one thread drawn from a web. The generalizations which we can make after taking cognizance of a certain number of instances are just as much and as little applicable to any given life as the probability tables of an insurance company. They are illuminating as guides to general expectation but will not closely correspond to any particular case. There cannot be any authoritative, objective determination of the proper elements and relationships of life, and any attempt to arrange for the life of another as a whole is profane. The clearest sighted come often enough into unlit passages of their own destiny where they must grope forward in bewilderment and a kind of awed respect for things which could go unsuspected and yet all along be "nearer to them than breathing, closer than hands and feet." Who then shall interpret another?

Yet life must be met with a certain hardihood. For the

conspicuously defective we know that self direction is impossible, and for the intolerably troublesome we accept coercion, but in the case of the merely dependent there are delicate lines to be drawn. Social work knows perfectly well that it is possible to degenerate into "substituting one neurosis for another." Hamlet, thrusting on the bewildered courtier the flute which that courtier could not play, spoke for many an inarticulate protestor, "Why, look you now, how unworthy a thing you make of me! You would play upon me you would seem to know my stops; you would pluck out the heart of my mystery; you would sound me from my lowest note to the top of my compass: and there is much music, excellent voice in this little organ; yet cannot you make it speak. 'sblood do you think I am easier to be played on than a pipe?"[7]

Lincoln is credited with the observation that the Lord never made the man who was good enough to have power over another man and, by its option of giving or withholding benefits, social work undoubtedly holds its beneficiaries very much in its power, not to mention the cases in which it has actual guardianship, legal or otherwise. A German social worker accustomed to the strict German notions of regulation could yet say after a study of American social work, "an individual is never so absolutely at the mercy of an administration as when he is the beneficiary of a relief system."[8] It is the social worker who is the champion of individual rights all down the line from insisting on discrimination among the men referred to en masse as "the criminal" to rescuing orphan children from the uniformity of plaid dresses all of a length. But who shall rescue the beneficiaries of social work?

Is it any wonder that people sometimes shudder at what social workers take upon themselves? But these are only the risks incident to great opportunity. If some social

7. Hamlet, Act III, Sc. 2, line 379.

8. Emil Muensterberg, Impressions of American Charity, in Charity and the Commons, 1907, p. 268.

workers run a policy into the ground, if they have neither imagination, reverence or a sense of humor, that is the fault of human nature and not the fault of social work. There are doctors who prescribe for cases they do not understand and fail to save the patients, there are dishonest and even addle-headed lawyers who defeat justice, and there are ministers of religion who are hypocrites, but their existence does not utterly discredit their professions. The quotations from the national conference and elsewhere must have made it clear that this sort of personal imposition and finessing in control are, if nothing else, too poor game to attract the main energies of social work. These have large issues to absorb them and the effect of the scientific methods and scientific knowledge which our definition makes essential is to encourage a robust interest in things clearly knowable and an attitude attentive and curious rather than dictatorial and inquisitive. Social work being the lineal descendant of charity has the family weaknesses and, perhaps even beyond its deserts, the family reputation. But the one question for anyone willing to do it justice is whether these weaknesses are characteristic of its present phase or fading hang-overs from the charity undisciplined by science. The records of past munificence with their evidence of interest in giving as a means of grace for the giver, of indifference regarding the supposed beneficiaries, of wholesale prescriptions of what is proper for "the poor," of breaking up of families, imposition of uniform labor and total disregard of private claims must be either unknown or forgotten by people who think a decay of neighborly respect and an inclination to regiment the dependant have been produced by the innovations of scientific social work.

So far we have been trying to get at and answer the rather vague charges of those who think social work unworthily employed. Clearer indictments are brought by the three groups who want us to turn from the defeated

and let them go under. The least extreme of these simply points out that life unfolds in terms of alternatives and the time, the skill, the substance and interest lavished by social work on the incompetent might have given opportunity to baulked ability. Of course incompetence and ability are relative matters and some forms of social work could make out a case for themselves as engaged on the task these critics would prefer, but it is easy to see the general bearing of this criticism and by our definition social work is committed to the very concern for the disadvantaged with which they charge it. But the definition also stipulated for the use of scientific knowledge and methods and once you have social work and social science playing into one another's hands you can answer even the baldest utilitarians on their own grounds. The effort to help where help is most needed has been to the social work of our definition a road to prevention of abuses which affect competent and incompetent alike, a means to better understanding and control of our social organization. In social as in other forms of science the normal is often only to be understood after observation of the abnormal. Moreover, the really imperative services of social work are evidently forgotten by these critics as well as by the second group who would say hands off to social work. These imperative services can be indicated for both groups at once.

This second group are opposed to social work, not as a mere waste of means which might be better employed, but as an actual menace. They think it thwarts the action of the salutary principle of nature by which the "fittest" survive their less "fit" brethren. The tacit assumption behind this view is that if all social work were suspended tomorrow, vigor and capacity would have pre-eminent survival value and the unfit would be eliminated and the race purged of an undesirable inheritance strain.

The race is to the swift and the battle to the strong, but in modern life, even where there is no social work, the

defeated are not forced clear off the stage with any degree of promptitude. Complete dismissal comes only by the arrow that flieth by noon-day or the pestilence that walketh in darkness and our modern versions of these strike the weak and the strong in a ratio which it would be hard to compute. War and industrial accidents take not the worst but the best and some of our most destructive diseases take, fairly indiscriminately, any who are exposed to them or their predisposing conditions. Meanwhile, what is there to extinguish the unfit? Though in a sense defeated they continue to live on and they leave progeny. Even without social work they would not starve or freeze to death in numbers sufficient to have the minutest effect upon the quality of the race.

The man of sub-normal intelligence, of bad nervous organization, of specific defect even, can, in most modern communities keep alive by his own efforts. He will drag on, abysmally incompetent, indolent, badly behaved or ill. He may irregularly rent a shelter which other men would refuse, he will inevitably do his little bit to demoralize the labor market and the work he from time to time takes up and he may, for one reason or another, go for awhile to prison. His demands on the almshouse we will omit as it would probably in this connection count as social work. He can do our work badly, put the cost of his keep on the community if he goes to prison, make our pockets or our persons unsafe, if he happens to be that way inclined, spread disease and even, for a consideration, vote. What is to be gained by leaving this poor creature to his own devices and the haphazard propagation of his species? From a biological point of view, nothing at all, and his running amuck is a nuisance and a menace. What could social work do? From a biological point of view, also nothing. If indeed the man were so far defective that it could confine him to an institution it might in that way prevent his leaving a family but this simple precaution the biological critics

would probably arrange for through some other agency. But social work might greatly limit his troublesomeness.

One can only conclude that those who advocate leaving the unfit to their own destruction do not know, as social work knows, how slow that destruction is going to be, how costly and troublesome to the community in which it is taking place, how many people may be, first and last, involved in it and, above all, how little likely it is to culminate before the unfit man has left children to succeed him.

Such glaring cases of unfitness are however not typical of the sort with which social work most often deals. More typical is such mild cherishing of unfitness as the securing of eye-glasses for a nearsighted child. Would it do any good to leave him without glasses, unable to see the blackboard at school, considered a blockhead, unhappy and defiant and growing up at odds with the world? He would be no whit less likely to have a family of shortsighted children.

Since the relative security of civilized life allows the unfit, left to their own devices, to live long enough to demoralize their community and perpetuate their strain, a humane guardianship supplied by social work, with an eye to prevention and all the possibilities of the social situation, is simply the safeguarding of a group in which spontaneous elimination has ceased to be sufficiently expeditious for the public safety.

The last of those who would say "hands off" believe that the needs to which social work at present ministers are chargeable to a few major abuses in our economic system which could and would be removed by swift revolutionary measures were it not for false hopes of gradual reform—hopes which social work helps to keep alive. They think that if the distress caused by "the present system" were left unrelieved people would be shocked into summary abolition of the system. The chances of concerted action on

any such program are so infinitesimal that it is difficult to regard such a proposal as anything but a mere "talking point" of propaganda. The abuses of the "present system" are too hideously great for us to risk any momentary discontinuance of their relief without a very certain guarantee of the desired results.

And when it comes to that we can but remember that the blackest nights of human oppression have not led to the brightest mornings of human brotherhood, though there has been many a fine gesture of uprising. What Mr. Wells remarks in his "Outline of History" apropos of the results of the French Revolution seems to be true of any attempt to emancipate life at a blow. "When these things of the ancient regime had vanished, it seemed as if they had never mattered. * * * the immense promise and air of a new world with which the Revolution had come remained unfulfilled.

"Yet, after all, this wave of revolution had realized nearly everything that had been clearly thought out before it. It was not failing for want of impetus but for want of finished ideas. Many things that had oppressed mankind were swept away forever. Now that they were swept away it became apparent how unprepared men were for the creative opportunities this clearance gave them. And periods of revolution are periods of action; in them men reap the harvest of ideas that have grown during phases of interlude, and they leave the fields cleared for a season of new growth, but they cannot suddenly produce ripened new ideas to meet an unanticipated riddle."[9] Despite the years of thinking that have elapsed since 1789, the Russian revolution finds itself in the same case. The present party that has attempted its clean sweep of previous organization is rich in coherence and intention but not in organization and expedients.

Much of what social work is now doing is developing

9. H. G. Wells, The Outline of History, Vol. II, p. 339.

expedients of social practice equally applicable and equally necessary under any form of government. The question of whether social work as such should occupy itself with the development of such expedients or with revolutionary projects belongs not with the discussion of its overdoing, but of its doing too little. The advocates of revolution say "hands off" but they really despise social work for temporizing.

To those who charge it with temporizing, the third and last group of its critics, social work listens very gravely. They touch it where its conscience is tender. The first group, those who charge it with unworthy patronage and intrusion do not touch its principle at all. It knows better than any one else the sort of thing that may easily be done in its name, knows that its recruits are unregenerate human beings who will have to learn to put aside personal for scientific curiosity and resist their enormous temptations to tyrannize. It knows that the things for which that first group condemns it are things which will always continue to menace it but things which, on the whole, it is growing away from. The second group, those who charge it with interfering with natural selection and wasting opportunity on lame ducks do not shake its conviction. It knows perfectly well that not social work but the abundance of mere food and shelter and the ingrained sympathy or solidarity, or what you will, of civilized man is what prevents the elimination of the unfit and that these unfit can only be made innocuous and self-supporting by methods and arrangements worked out by the intelligence of the especially fit.

But when this third group tell social work that it is not extending benefits but in the long run delaying their extension, when they tell it that there is a dragon "privilege" which can grow new heads of offence faster than it can cut them off, when they say that social work must be either utterly entangled in its own red tape or corrupted by the

flesh pots of Egypt not to see that it is simply compounding with the mammon of unrighteousness to allow the continuance of privilege and abuse, then indeed social work itself is troubled. It has known all along that those are wrong who say it is a mistake to serve the disadvantaged, but to be told that it—social work—is not serving them, that is a very different matter. The charges are two, first that it is selfish and pharisaical, and second that it is practically bought for the defense of privilege. The first complain of

> "The organized charity scrimped and iced
> In the name of a cautious statistical Christ."[10]

Social work is confessed by the definition, to be "cautious" and "statistical." Used in this opprobrious sense the words make a reproach that could scarcely be more bitter, but who would want a doctor to pour out without stint the strichnia needed by his patient's heart? The development of methods, standards and technique has been referred to in these pages as matter only for congratulation. But obviously these have their dangers like everything else. Our childish humanity has been tempted, from the days of the medicine man on, rather to claim the confidence of a gullible public by the impressiveness of its ceremonies than arduously to achieve that confidence by the excellence of its performance. The temptation to aim at an impression is especially strong in the case of social work because it often does for people the sort of things that friends are at the same time sporadically attempting. When with every intention of producing efficiency social work tries to establish "standards" it again has to risk the shift of emphasis from the work to the technical measurement and the resulting tendency to attempt what can be put through in good form instead of what most needs to be done.

But the greatest resentment is probably not caused by these lapses, which social workers themselves know better than outsiders. "Organized charity" did not, as it is so

10. John Boyle O'Reilly, In Bohemia, quoted in The Cry for Justice, p. 497.

easy for those who know only the present to assume, originate suspicious scrutiny. Charity was "cautious" in the sense of the bitter couplet long before the present organized charity movement. The fierce old English poor law took no chances on "impostors"[11] and the dread of them by the private charities of the continent in the sixteenth century has already been referred to in these pages. It is, of course, easy to see the necessity for "investigation" when charity is on a large scale. But it is easier to resent for oneself, or one's friends, the mortification of being suspect; and to many people "organized charity" has never meant anything more than an attempt to prevent overlapping and imposture. But in the scientific charity movement precaution soon sank into insignificance beside the more positive purpose of learning enough about a situation to tackle it intelligently. This is a trifle harder to understand and even easier to resent. When we want help we usually have a pretty definite notion of just what help we need, we are in a touchy mood to begin with, and unless we are very nice people indeed we resent any questioning of our preference. It is a matter of common knowledge that those who do not appreciate the difficulty of the doctor's task and the time required for cures drift from one dispensary to another and try physician after physician in search of one who will treat their troubles as they think they should be treated and give them the relief for which suffering dares not cease to hope. What wonder if a yet greater dissatisfaction is felt with the deliberateness of the social worker. And if, as we have said in the definition, he is to proceed by "scientific" methods he must be as "cautious" and "statistical" as the doctor.

But granting the need of caution in proceedure it is shocking and repellant, on the face of it, that this organized charity should make the throbbing woes of a fellow creature the subject of dehumanized records. It is bad enough that

11. S. A. Queen, Social Work in the Light of History, Chap. II.

people should be required to strip their predicament bare, exhibit all their helplessness and violate reticence to expound whatever can "throw light on the situation"—but why must it be recorded? But it is shocking enough to learn that someone we care for is known as a certain sort of case in a hospital and yet we have now so far appreciated medical exigencies as to accept it as a necessity. In other matters also we may come to realize that there is no impertinence in impersonal treatment for purposes of serviceable classification, and for all classification the prerequisite is records.

A final source of misunderstanding is the double nature of the social worker's task. Not only in relief work but in other lines as well he is not free to do as he would, he cannot always command the means. He can decide what he thinks would best be done but then he has to consider what sort of approximation to that best the resources of his association or community allow. The Webbs, in outlining a proposed reorganization of the English relief system, say that "Nothing has contributed so much to make the visits of the Poor Law Relieving Officer odious as the *mixture* of his inquiries—as to the sickness of the person who is ill, or the lunacy of the person of unsound mind, and at the same time, as to the means of the family and as to what relations could be made to contribute."[12] This stewardship for public or contributed funds and for doing things quite irrelevant to any intention of social work do more than anything else to make it seem "scrimped."

Social work, then, may take heart of grace. It is, once again, being condemned chiefly on misunderstanding and for the rest on its mere shortcomings. All human undertakings must expect that and try to amend and carry on.

It may summon its courage and meet the last charge, the one that seems to make it most uncomfortable, a charge that not only says it bails the sea with a sieve and

12. Sidney and Beatrice Webb, The Prevention of Destitution, p. 281.

locks the door when the horse is out of the stable, but goes farther and ascribes motives—"the social worker is called an apologist for the status quo; he is called a little brother of the rich; he is accused of taking tainted money;"[13]—and why? Because social work continues in what its critics consider "remedial" work instead of addressing itself to wholesale and summary prevention.

Whose fault is that? Let any one who blames it on social work turn to the reports of the national conference. Let him turn to the "Survey." He will find no lack of interest in prevention. The fact is that social work is paid for by voluntary subscriptions, philanthropic foundations, and state appropriations. So far all these sources of support, the potential representatives of the people in the legislature no less than wealthy donors, are more accessible to an appeal for relief of existing misery than to an appeal for the prevention of possible catastrophes. This ties the hands of social work even in the simple matters in which it might alone do more "preventive work." But social work cannot alone, in any but a secondary sense, prevent the situations it is called upon to relieve. It works prevention as hard as it can and puts it up to the community in plain terms, but the situations which, at our present stage of progress, largely occupy its services could only be prevented by a living wage and regular employment, work that would not poison or exhaust the worker, sanitary and decent housing, clean milk, and so on through the list of those simple requisites of a civilized life which are now inaccessible to a large part of our population. Social work cannot give employers the will or the ability to pay a living wage; it cannot provide the masses with decent housing and unadulterated food nor, all at once, with a corresponding standard and habit of living. And if it should stop all it is doing now, in order to devote itself to prevention, neglected children would grow up unhealthy and vicious, the feeble-

13. Arthur J. Todd, at the National Conference, 1920, p. 271.

minded would multiply and every calamity of today become a fruitful source of multiplied disaster tomorrow. One might as well ask that all physicians cease treating from day to day the many diseases that afflict us, the better to devote themselves to a wholesale campaign of prevention. The social work of our definition has its own specific work to do from day to day. It must, like medicine, care for the handicapped in each generation and prevent the spread of contagion while it uses the margin of its energies for prevention and progress.

Social work *as we have described it,* is not synonymous with social reform. It has no more responsibility for reform on "general principles" than has any other profession or calling. That it should ever be thought to have is a tribute to its thoroughness and convincing proof of its devotion to prevention.

We are told, as though to settle the case against social work, that there are even social workers "who, while they may not say it publicly, do not hesitate to say privately that they regard social work as a mere "palliative," and while they get their living from it, their real hopes are pinned to the coming social revolution."[14] The personal immorality of anyone who would continue to get a living from a calling he believed to be sailing under false colors is not our business, but, if social work is what our definition says, there is no reason why any social worker need hesitate to say, either privately or with all the publicity he can command, that his hopes are pinned to the coming social revolution, or to the effects of New Thought or the Seventh Day Advent or anything else to which he may have happened, according to his lights and temperament, to have pinned them.

Social work attempts to serve persons in need of help; it shepherds the rear of the social procession; it cares for the casualties; it also claims opportunity for the unprivi-

14. Charles A. Ellwood, at the National Conference, 1920, p. 271.

leged and asserts the rights of the individual lost in the mass. In so doing it finds itself effecting progress in the many ways already discussed. They are usually indirect ways. These critics assume that it could induce progress directly by an attempt to bring about radical social changes that would do away with the need for its services. They quote against it Tolstoi's indictment of our social system—"The present position we, the educated and well-to-do classes, occupy is that of the Old Man of the Sea, riding on the poor man's back, only, unlike the Old Man of the Sea, we are sorry for the poor man, very sorry. And we will do almost anything for the poor man's relief; we will not only supply him with food sufficient for him to keep on his legs, but will provide him with cooling draughts concocted on strictly scientific principles; we will teach and instruct him and point out to him the beauties of the landscape; we will discourse sweet music to him and give him lots of good advice. Yes we will do almost anything for the poor man, anything but get off his back."[15]

Such a picture makes everyone unhappy to reflect on and in face of it thoughtful social workers take stock of their position. But they can only conclude that to accuse social work per se of insincerity and temporizing, of clinging to a snug berth, because it does not attempt to end this intolerable situation by revolution is to imagine it both greater and less than it is. We have already seen that it is only a calling like others with a day's work of its own. Reforms merely free it from old duties and open the gates to new ones and there is no reason to suppose that changes the most radical would do away with the need of it or the human impulse that perpetually recreates it. Whether revolutionary methods would free us from present abuses and confront us with a new set but, as it were, upon a higher level, is, of course an open question and a relevant one. But it is a question of pure expediency facing the social worker of each generation as it faces anyone else and

15. Count Leo Tolstoy, quoted in The Cry for Justice, p. 88.

it in no way involves the integrity or the permanency of the function of social work.

The alternatives in the interest of which social work is by these critics condemned are the labor movement and social revolution. But these are hardly genuine alternatives. Both of them have the allegiance of people in many callings, but each provides a day's work to a comparatively small number of organizers and other workers. There is no logical reason why a social worker should not be active in the service of either or both and yet remain in his calling, as the bricklayer, lawyer, or laborer may.

The labor movement and social revolution and social work are three things of three entirely different kinds. The labor movement is a tide in human affairs. It is the projection in practical issues of certain interpretations and ideals of life. Social revolution is a cataclysmic expedient for precipitating, in finished form, readjustments which the labor movement and certain other influences tend gradually and adaptively to effect. The one is a great movement now under way, the other a vast enterprise or a vast dream. For them is spilt the martyr blood that is the seed of every church militant. They throw down a gauntlet; they raise a banner; they stir our hearts. But why not let the social worker also plod on with a good conconscience and a hope for his labors.

> For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,
> Seem here no painful inch to gain,
> Far back through creeks and inlets making,
> Comes silent, flooding in, the main.
>
> And not by eastern windows only,
> When daylight comes, comes in the light;
> In front the sun climbs slow, how slowly.
> But westward, look! the land is bright.[16]

Social work is a group of callings representing a certain

16. Arthur Hugh Clough, "Say not the struggle nought availeth," in Poems.

function of civilized society whatever form that society may take. Its nearest analogy is educational work. Whatever form society may assume education seems likely to retain the functions of rendering available the experience and conclusions of the past and developing the capacities of each generation as it comes on. Similarly we can ascribe to social work, under whatever system of society it may be conducted, the functions of completing inadequacy, extending benefits and rescuing the individual from the category. In a community where no one was poor or out of work, where abundance of pure food and decent housing were available for all, where wholesome recreation was attainable and attractive, and physical and mental hygiene as much a matter of course as school attendance, the tasks of the social worker would not be what they are now; they would be changed beyond our imagining. But they might still be present. In some distant sunny noonday of a healthy happy world it may even be possible that the supernormal will need rescue from victimizing by the mass. Even today social work is concerned for the superior child handicapped by a public school routine that forces him to keep step with the average and the dull.

What is overlooked by those who fail to see this permanency in social work is that it has a day's work of its own. Since its object is personal service, it tends to focus in the present and since that personal service is primarily the relief of need, it is relative to the standard of the times. "Radicalism is not an absolute but a relative school of thought. It stands for the things that the government is not ready to do. Hence it is that no government is really radical."[17] Social work is radical in the sense that it proffers services that have not yet become duties. It is by the same token that it is also relative and will, despite changes in social organization, continue to relieve new needs, to extend new benefits and to rescue individuals from newly-felt forms of regimentation.

17. Frank Parsons, Legal Doctrine and Social Progress, p. 212.

That social work, as a calling, does not make itself tributary to any one social philosophy casts no suspicion on its integrity. Nor is it strange that the majority of social workers individually should continue to hold, on the subject of revolution, the opinions of the majority of their fellow citizens. That social workers should become so much interested in their own methods of relief as to forget the prime object of all their system, that they should become so devoted to the success of particular undertakings as to be unobservant of other and perhaps better attempts to relieve needs is a reproach to the guilty persons but it no more touches the principles and functions of social work than similar faults of practitioners in other lines condition the presumptive functions of their respective callings. Were this a discussion of social work in practice it would be necessary to consider the degree to which its practitioners have realized its possibilities. But a study of the nature and functions of social work such as this purports to be would lose itself in confusion in any attempt to determine precisely how far instances have run true to type. The teaching offered by the schools and the interests reflected in the National Conference prove beyond a doubt the direction of its main stream.

The charge we have just been discussing is the last of the major accusations commonly brought against social work, and the definition we have been using has now been shown to describe a social work that can meet its critics squarely and retain a claim to a function of its own in social economy and a certain character and integrity.

It is one of those human activities which are pursued, as we say, for their own sake. It can be justified on utilitarian grounds but the justification never amounts to more than permission to follow our inclination untroubled. Yet, unlike other such activities, unlike recreation, art and learning, it does not reach out to life at its happiest and most conscious, its fullest and finest, but seeks, "Rather the

scorned—the rejected—the men hemmed in by the spears." Social work lifts burdens, fills needs, extends benefits.

"Not the ruler for me, but the ranker, the tramp of the road,
The slave with the sack on his shoulder, pricked on with the goad,
The man with too weighty a burden, too weary a load.
* * * * * * * * * *
Others may sing of the wine and the wealth and the mirth,
The portly presence of potentates goodly in girth;
Mine be the dirt and the dross, the dust and scum of the earth."[18]

Social work is interested in all people that need help and classifies them according to their needs, with no ulterior interest. It tries to serve them in their individual capacity as human beings with lives of their own. It is always extending benefits in excess of any recognized obligation. These we have heretofore said were the habits of charity, using the word in a broad and primitive sense. When charity adopted a scientific method and took to studying the social sciences for light on its problems social work began. Although it has been necessary to refer to charity often and at length in establishing the nature of social work, it is not well to dwell on it in general discussion, because, first, it has lately been applied only to the relief of poverty and cannot be used in a wider sense without explanation and, secondly, through centuries of association with an idea of meritorious liberality towards persons inferior, it has acquired connotations which do not belong to social work.

Social work as we now have it makes use of modern science. From the social sciences it takes perspective, generalization and knowledge of the complication of influences responsible for any given situation. By statistical methods it relates cause and effect. The discovery of such a relationship always emphasizes causes and in consequence social work extends its protective function in the direction of prevention. By so doing it becomes not only a minister

18. John Masefield, A Consecration, in Poems.

to misery but also one of the forces operating to make the world a better dwelling place for all of its inhabitants.

Social work because it is tentative and experimental seems to be imperfectly developed and still on trial. There is a temptation to anticipate for it more certainty, more obvious consistency and more clearly formulated purposes when it shall have become better established. But any such anticipation fails to take account of its wholly relative nature. Social work is always feeling its way beyond clearly formulated obligations, ignoring imposed consistencies and groping in unexplored regions where sure-footedness is not possible. Social work will take many more forms and all of them will prove temporary.

This makes social work hard to compare with the established professions with the ministrations of which its services have many points in common, with medicine for example. Although several sciences are helpful to social work it specializes in the application of no one of them. It is only in the very loosest sense applied sociology and might with almost equal suggestiveness be called applied eugenics or social psychology or any one of half a dozen other things. Conversely its observations and experiences are valuable to a dozen arts and sciences but build no science of their own. Nor does it build any systematically cumulative body of principles exclusively for its own use, as does the law. This is no disgrace to social work, which may be equally respectable with the well established professions and yet quite *sui generis*. But it operates in indirect ways as a handicap.

It is a familiar observation that any new science, any new departure in human knowledge must use the vocabulary already available and so can only receive its first formulation in terms of things that have gone before. The failure of social work to produce any compact body of doctrine pertaining to its range of undertakings has kept it long in the stage of analogy and tutelage. It evidently

feels a temptation to shape itself after the fashion of the best respected types of human activity instead of simply envisaging its own objects as clearly as possible and enlisting every available means to attain them.

Its essential inability to develop any compact body of doctrine may also be handicapping it in a more fundamental way. It is said that social work does not get its proportionate share of the best students taking professional training. May not this be becasue a course which offers an acquaintance with the high lights of half a dozen subjects and mastery of none is not likely to recommend itself to able students as promising to lead to dignified and responsible work? Social work can only hope that when more time and more ability have gone into the development of its separate fields such discipline may be developed along special lines as will give it better intellectual status and the power to attract and hold recruits by something beside that appeal to their imagination or their humanity exerted by its general possibilities. "I treat philanthropy seriously," wrote one of its historians, "because of what it implies; its professors have commonly not been very efficacious."[19] But scientific social work is something more than philanthropy and its history is yet to be made.

Whatever is in store for social work it is pre-ordained that its functions can only persist by adaptive variation of its practices, that it will never be perfected, never be satisfied, never even, in any final and completed sense, successful. Its object is to correct the mistakes of nature and man in the making of human lives and its undertakings grow with our hopes for life. Such presumption can never succeed, but its mere instalments of success would be triumphs in a lesser enterprise. For social work each new triumph opens only a new range of possibilities. It might well take as its motto the proud words of Masefield, "Success is the brand on the forehead for having aimed too low."[20]

19. Philanthropy and the State, p. 20.
20. John Masefield, Multitude and Solitude.

APPENDIX I

Edward T. Devine in "Social Work" says (p. 21): "Social work, then is the sum of all the efforts made by society to 'take up its own slack' to provide for individuals when its established institutions fail them, to supplement those established institutions and to modify them at those points at which they have proved to be badly adapted to social needs. * * * * It may be well done or badly done; according to the most enlightened system which intelligence and experience and sympathy and vision can devise or according to the archaic methods of careless and lazy emotion. * * * * It includes everything which is done by society for the benefit of those who are not in position to compete on fair terms with their fellows from whatever motive it may be done, by whatever agency or whatever means and with whatever results."

Edward T. Devine and Lilian Brant in "American Social Work in the Twentieth Century" say (the first words of the book): "In the United States of America 'social work' has come into use in recent years as a comprehensive term, including charity and philanthropy, public relief, punishment and reformation and all other conscious efforts, whether by the state or on private initiative, to provide for the dependent, the sick, and the criminal, to diminish the amount of poverty, disease, and crime, and to improve general living and working conditions."

These statements obviously are not trying to distinguish between "social work" and the more primitive forms of "charity" and "philanthropy."

The pamphlet **"Social Work,"** issued by the American Association of Social Workers in 1922 disclaims any intention "to give an authoritative definition of these terms (i.e., charity, philanthropy, and social service) or of 'social work,' " but it does authoritatively indicate that "social work as a profession" may have occasion to differentiate itself from charity and philanthropy (pp. 3 and 4). "In discussing social work as a profession it is necessary to clarify certain conceptions which are popularly confused with it. As is the case with any activity that has emerged into professional status and differentiated itself from the kind of activity in which any one of ordinary intelligence might participate, social work must live down a variety of names and conceptions which were common to it in its early and unprofessional forms." "So we come to the term 'social work' for a connotation which at least has implicit implications of a process requiring specialized knowledge and skill sufficient to be called professional." "It is well also to point out here that emphasis must be placed on 'process' as an aid to keeping in mind the fact that not what is done, but how it is done, is what constitutes the test of professional activity."

"Education for Social Work," by Jesse Frederick Steiner (University of Chicago Press, 1921) gives, as its first chapter, a five-page statement of "The Nature of Social Work" which does not lend itself to quotation otherwise than *in toto*. It reports about the same conclusions as this thesis, which was prepared before Mr. Steiner's study.

Porter R. Lee speaking to the National Conference of Social Work in 1915 (see Report p. 597) described three conceptions of the social worker. First, "Any person is a social worker if his work has conscious social purpose,

although his vocation may be any one of the historic forms of human activity. The second conception includes as social workers those who are engaged in so-called preventive work, that is to say, those whose efforts are directed towards social legislation, toward the development of the social point of view in the general public and toward readjustments in social institutions and social habits. * * * social work in this sense is not concerned with those who are disabled by adverse conditions of life but with the adverse conditions. The third conception of the social worker on the other hand identifies him primarily with efforts on behalf of the subnormal. To one holding this conception the social worker is one who endeavors through case work to reestablish disabled families and individuals in a routine of normal life. This does not preclude interest in social legislation and other forms of preventive work, but these are not the first task of the social worker. When social work as a generic term first came into general use leaders in the work for dependent families, neglected children, the defective, the delinquent and the destitute sick comprised almost the entire group to which it was applied." In the 1920 Conference (see Report p. 466) Mr. Lee said: "The subject matter of social work is the adjustment of men to their environment. * * * * The necessity for social work arises because of the difficulties faced by men in making this adjustment. These difficulties are sometimes in the man and sometimes in the environment. Some factors in the environment bear too heavily upon all men, some bear too heavily upon a smaller number * * * * A large part of social work is conducted with the purpose of softening the effect of environmental factors which bear with undue severity upon all men. Another large part of social work aims at the development of greater resourcefulness in

all men in meeting environmental demands. The greater part of social work, however, is at present devoted to the development of a higher adjusting power in those persons who are most handicapped by environment or a modification of those particular environmental factors which handicap them."

Miss Mary E. Richmond in "What is Social Case Work?" (Russell Sage Foundation, N.Y., 1922) breaks up what Mr. Lee calls "preventive work" into three parts (pp. 223, 224). "The other forms of social work all of which interplay with case work, are three—group work, social reform, and social research. Case work seeks to effect better social relations by dealing with individuals one by one or within the intimate group of the family. But social work also achieves the same general ends in these other ways. It includes a wide variety of group activities—settlement work, recreational work, club, neighborhood and local community work—in which the individual, though still met face to face, becomes one of a number. By a method different from that employed in either case or group work, though with the same end in view, social reform seeks to improve conditions in the mass, chiefly through social propaganda and social legislation. Whether the immediate object be better housing, better working conditions, better use of leisure, or a long list of other objectives, the main purpose in these different social reforms still is to advance the development of our human kind by improving social relations. Finally, social research with its precious freight of original discovery in all the fields covered by social work, has also the secondary task of assembling known facts in order to reinterpret them for use in social reform, in group work and in case work."

A fair amount of searching has failed to reveal many statements which do as much as the above toward defining

social work in succinct and specific terms. One finds instead descriptions which, while satisfactory enough for the purposes for which each was intended, ascribe to it no really distinctive character but rather present it in generalizations equally true of other disinterested undertakings, or by making it synonymous with applied sociology or applied religion simply throw the burden of definition onto those other terms leaving the matter as indefinite as before.

APPENDIX II

A

A list of the schools belonging (in 1921) to the "Association of Training Schools for Professional Social Workers," organized 1919, President. Prof. J. E. Cutler, Western Reserve University.

Boston School of Social Work, Boston.
Carola Woerishoffer Graduate Department of Social Economy and Social Research, Bryn Mawr College.
College of Commerce and Journalism, Ohio State University.
Department of Social Work, Carnegie Institute of Technology.
Department of Social Work, University of Toronto.
Missouri School of Social Economy, St. Louis (part of the University of Missouri).
New York School of Social Work, New York.
Pennsylvania School of Social and Health Work, Philadelphia.
Philanthropic Service Division, School of Commerce and Administration, University of Chicago.
School of Applied Social Science, Western Reserve University.
School of Public Welfare, University of North Carolina.
School of Social Work and Public Health, Richmond, Va.
Smith College Training School for Social Work, Smith College.
Training Course in Civics and Social Work, University of Pittsburgh.
Training Course for Social and Civic Work, University of Minnesota.

B

The number of schools which make a separate department of each of the seventeen subjects referred to in the text (not the number of courses in these subjects) is as follows. The list is somewhat misleading in appearance as it gives prominence to the subjects most often treated *separately* rather than to those most often or most fully treated. As a matter of fact separate treatment sometimes means the somewhat casual addition of a subject after the central interests of the program have been pretty well integrated.

Industrial work, including industrial supervision and employment, personnel work, service departments and nursing 10
Community work or service, or organization 9

Medical social work	8
Child welfare	8
Social research and investigation	7
Social case work, social relief and social guardianship	5
Family welfare work	5
Mental hygiene and psychiatric social work	5
Community organization and recreation, physical education and recreation	4
Penology or delinquency or criminality	4
Settlement work, educational and vocational guidance.	
Public health work	2

C

A list of forty subjects taught in the training schools as preparation for work in specific fields. The figures accompanying the following list of subjects do not indicate the number of courses in the subject but the number of schools in which the subject is taught.

Public health	12
Psychiatric social work	7
Mental testing	6
Medical social work	6
Abnormal psychology	4
Personal hygiene and first aid	1
Social hygiene	1
Community organization	13
Recreation and special means of recreation	10
Municipal problems	7
Rural social problems	5
Municipal government	2
Neighborhood work	1
Community art	1
Case work	13
Family welfare	4
Industry	14
Child welfare	10
Vocational guidance	2
Education	2
Immigration	6

Race problems	6
Social legislation	6
Elements or special features of law	4
Dependents, defectives and delinquents	4
Penology or criminology	4
Probation	1
Organization and administration of various sorts	8
Political science	2
Social and political philosophy	2
Socialism and social reform	1
The social institution of religion	1
Food and diet	4
Home economics	2
Housing	4
Record keeping and methods of presentation	4
Biology	2
Standard of living, etc	1

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